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NEW
STATESMAN

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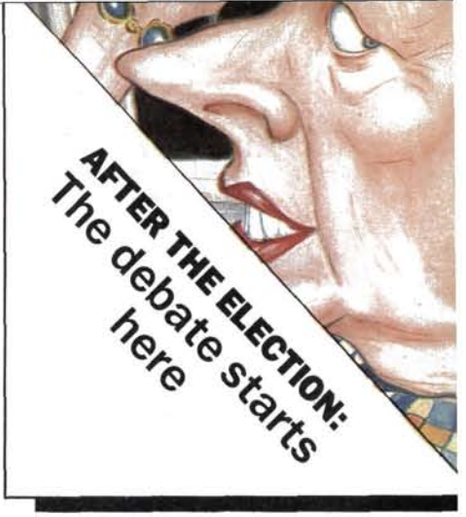

AFTER THE ELECTION: The debate starts here

A GATHERING STORM

'After . . . 1988 . . . it was too late. The eleventh hour for Europe had come and gone, and the midnight bell had started to toll'

Peter Jay & Michael Stewart
Apocalypse 2000

Cover photo: John Sturrock/Network

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In the recent Budget, the duty on unleaded petrol was reduced – so now it's no more expensive than leaded petrol.

"What's it to do with me?" you may ask. "My car can't run on it."

Well, it may interest you to know that already many cars can run on unleaded petrol, and the number is increasing daily. In fact, very soon all new cars will be designed to run on unleaded.

Along with our EEC partners, the UK has agreed that unleaded petrol should be made widely available by October 1989.

And in this 1987 European Year of the Environment, Esso is taking firm steps to help achieve this goal.

In fact, since mid-1986 we have already introduced a national network of over 100 strategically chosen sites selling Esso Unleaded.

LEAPING FORWARD WITH UNLEADED.

For motorists, the changeover will probably raise more questions than answers, which is why we've produced this page.

Alternatively, pick up the Esso Unleaded leaflets, including our Service Station Site Directory, at your nearest Esso Station.

We hope you will find them helpful.

1 Q What is unleaded petrol?
A *It is petrol to which no lead has been deliberately added.*

2 Q Why is lead added to petrol?
A *Small quantities of lead compounds can be added to petrol to increase its octane number. This allows the use of higher compression ratio engines with more ignition spark advance, which means improved engine efficiency and fuel economy. To replace lead we have to introduce more high octane compounds to compensate.*

3 Q What is 'low lead' petrol compared to unleaded?
A *Low lead refers to the normal leaded petrol which is currently available. This is because the lead content was reduced in all petrol to 0.15g per litre on 1st January 1986 from its previous level of 0.40g per litre, in line with British Standard 4040. Unleaded petrol is allowed to contain up to 0.013g per litre which is why it cannot be called 'lead free', although on the Continent this term may be used where unleaded cannot be translated.*

4 Q Can I use unleaded petrol in my car?
A *The majority of cars in the United Kingdom have been designed to run on leaded petrol. However, nearly 40% of post-1985 petrol cars are now capable of running on unleaded fuel, although most will need some minor adjustments to allow this. Eventually all new petrol cars will incorporate the necessary modifications for them to run on unleaded. Before attempting to use unleaded petrol you should check first with your car dealer or motor manufacturer.*

5 Q What is a catalytic converter?
A *Although not legally required in the UK at present, a catalytic converter is a device that can be fitted to the exhaust system. When the exhaust fumes pass through the converter, emissions such as nitrogen oxide and carbon monoxide are burnt up or oxidised. Unfortunately, lead damages the catalysts, so they are only effective on cars already using unleaded petrol.*

6 Q Where can I buy unleaded petrol?
A *Esso were the first company in the UK to put unleaded on sale. And since then we have been increasing the number of our service stations that sell unleaded petrol. We now have more stations selling unleaded than all our competitors put together. For details of where you can buy Esso Unleaded please pick up a FREE copy of our latest site directory from any Esso station.*

7 Q How will I know which pump dispenses unleaded petrol?
A *Esso Unleaded pumps are clearly marked UNLEADED and will usually have a small pump nozzle and identification cover marked UNLEADED on the nozzle.*

8 Q What happens if I inadvertently put the wrong fuel in my car?
A *Given the safeguards mentioned above it would be very difficult for you to do so. However, an isolated incident may not be too serious. Unleaded petrol used in an engine designed to take leaded, or leaded petrol used in an unleaded engine, could eventually cause damage to the engine.*

9 Q What about other petrol fuelled equipment, like my lawn mower and chain saw?
A *Some will operate successfully on unleaded. However, you should check with the manufacturer or dealer for specific advice and follow their recommendations.*

10 Q For how long will leaded petrol continue to be available?
A *Unleaded petrol will be phased in over a number of years. Therefore both leaded and unleaded will be available for a transition period which will be as long as the present product is required to supply today's cars.*

11 Q What happens if I take my car to the Continent?
A *Both leaded and unleaded petrol are available in Europe. There may be slight differences in unleaded to take account of local conditions, but this is unlikely to affect a car that can run on unleaded petrol.*

Esso

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NEW STATESMAN

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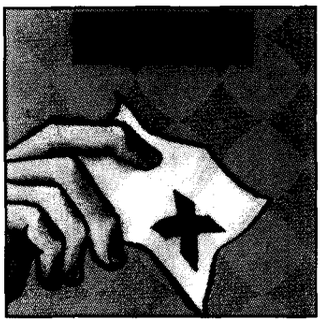
How to win in 1991



LABOUR SHOULD have won the election for the sake of millions of people who cannot form an electoral majority but carry on their backs the prosperity of those who could. It had and has a responsibility not just to articulate their plight — which Neil Kinnock did very well — but also to construct a politics which can ensure their transformation from a minority of losers into a winning majority. It certainly has not been able to do that, and just as certainly it now must.

Even as early and as impressionistic an analysis as this recognises there is no simple cause to Labour's defeat. But there has been, over the past decade at least, an underlying habit of mind in Labour which should change. Labour has got into the bad habit of talking to itself: of using debates and resolutions and the composition of committees as proxies for the real world even as the party — sociologically, numerically, rhetorically — was removing itself further and further from most people's experiences. Some of that habit has been lost: but not enough.

Nowhere has this been so true, and nowhere so damagingly true, as in defence. Every bit of polling evidence, including that most important poll of 11 June, confirmed what should have been the already obvious fact — that the problem with a unilateral defence policy was not *how* it was presented, but *that* it was presented.

Labour has to stop treating unilateralism as a shibboleth. It is a tactic, not a principle — a tactic, moreover, which must include in its scope of consideration whether or not it makes Labour unelectable. Unilateralism does not work, either at home or abroad: at home, it is rejected by over 60 per cent of the electorate: abroad, it finds no resonance with any member of the NATO alliance. Labour could have been the government most vigorously pursuing disarmament: instead, it remains in opposition in part because it was the party which hooked itself to a tactic for disarmament which lost it votes, most of all among its once 'natural' supporters in the working class.

Labour can remain the party of disarmament and detente, without impaling itself on a posture borrowed from a pressure group which makes no sense to the commonsensical because it gives something away for nothing. Those who believe this to be right in the parliamentary Labour Party and outside of it owe it to their party to say so clearly now. If that causes a row, so be it: Labour has been given time to have a row or two.

The party needs — as Peter Shore, the shadow House of Commons leader remarked in the early hours of last Friday morning — some 18 months of profound reflection. The peaceful vision this conjures up will be interrupted, for sure, by sporadic bursts of infighting: but the aim of the leadership and, on an optimistic assessment, of a growing mass of party members and supporters, must be to produce a party which can again bid for the centre-left ground and can offer the electorate a sense that it can command the dynamic of progress as well as protect and sustain those who are its victims. There is no substitute for the continuing effort to advance a politics which adapts the tenets of democratic socialism, or social democracy, to the present day.

Yet the starkest fact of the election result was the scale of the Tory victory, and the recognition that an opposition as deeply split as the British one cannot look forward to an electoral victory while it remains so. What can be done about it?

The Alliance took 23 per cent of the vote after a bad campaign. It is second in well over half of the Tory-held seats. Its Liberal activists have a traditional base in many areas of the country and have retained many of the inner-urban strongholds they have recently taken; the new Social Democrat recruits are unlikely to flock back to the Labour Party in significant numbers. Some 3-4 per cent of its vote went over to Labour in the early stages of the campaign: but, thereafter, it could not be squeezed further.

It may be that a Labour Party which can occupy centre-left ground can so reduce at least the SDP's reason for separate existence that it collapses. In the meantime, however, it remains a force, one which can again wax given a favourable by-election or a prolonged bout of Labour in-fighting. Labour should explore the possibilities of some co-operation, at least in the Commons and preferably outside, too. A joint approach on legislation, even where the 102 majority will ensure its passing, maximises opposition: and both Labour- and Alliance-controlled councils (and some Tory ones too) should co-operate in ensuring that the Prime Minister's sudden concern for the inner cities means something to the inner citizens.

Many Liberals and some Social Democrats already favour a pre-electoral pact with a joint commitment to proportional representation: it is unnecessary to endorse such a strategy, but it is necessary to think it through. If the leaders of the Labour Party and the Alliance believe even a small part of their rhetoric about the effects of a Thatcher government, they must now explore the most effective ways of giving their voters a voice.

John Lloyd

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POST-ELECTION DIARY

It was the best of weeks, it was the worst of weeks. At the beginning of it even Labour members too cynical to think we could win were seduced by the success of our campaign into thinking that we wouldn't actually lose. It was a week in which the polls put psephology and phrenology on an equally firm scientific footing. I put this to Vincent Hanna in Islwyn the night before the election. 'It depends whether you're feeling the right bumps,' he explained. I still think the *Newsnight* method held water. It was the thoughts of 100,000 or so voters scattered over those target marginals which would decide the issue, not the massed multi-thousand majorities of Liverpool and Glasgow or the feudal reaches of the South.

○

It was difficult, working in the Leader's bunker till late at night, to know what was happening outside. I depended for information on the polls and talkative taxi drivers, all of whom were favourable. Our bunker spy Michael went daily to the portakabin in Smith Square to pick up the Tory press releases. Even when he wore a black shirt and looked like a Mussolini *squadristo* they still harassed him when they found where he was coming from. But after two days he came back with the news that the Scots security guards hired to guard the Tory cabin from the ecstatic masses were both praying for victory — for us.

Last Tuesday I was given the results of the worst, and presumably least publicised, poll of all. This holocaust scenario gave a two-thirds vote for the Conservatives. I broke the news to Neil in Islwyn the night before the election, to counter any euphoria from *Newsnight*. Even that late at night he went pale until I hastily and contritely pulled out a copy of the *Sing Tao* Chinese daily in which it appeared.

The poll was awful. Sixty-six per cent of Chinese readers of *Sing Tao* were firmly for taking the capitalist road much further than even Deng Tsiaoping intended. Only 9 per cent took the firm proletarian line of Labour, and a mere 2 per cent were going to support the Alliance. It was enough to make a retired maoist like myself long for the great days of the Cultural Revolution.

It wasn't as though we had ignored the problems of the Chinese community. Lorna Wong, the *Sing Tao* journalist who had told us about the poll, had already caused consternation in the campaign scriptorium by ringing to ask about our pledge to allow spouses in to join passport holders here. 'All spouses?' she asked, claiming that this was a burning question among her readers. Deep recesses of memory bubbled with a disquiet which I just couldn't put a finger on. 'Yes, regardless of sex,' I answered emphasising our firm feminist line. 'And in the case of polygamous marriages?' she continued disconcertingly. A difficult one, not fully answered or answerable. But if the spouses had children, if we weren't to split the family, we'd have to let in the children. And then we wouldn't be able to say no to the mothers would we? 'Can we quote you on that?' 'Certainly not.'

It's one of the problems with promises about future conduct. People expect us to keep them, while they will blithely vote Conservative in the full knowledge that they have lied about the past, dissimulate about the present and put an X certificate on the future. So when Lorna had phoned back with the poll results, I presumed she was testing our caring, compassionate campaign to the outer limits by checking whether the all-spouses promise included Tibetan husbands in polyandrous relations. But that one will have to wait for the next campaign.

○

It was a far cry from such metropolitan worries at Pontllanfraith leisure centre. Cardiff Town Hall an hour before had been filled with a feeling of shared Welshness — which didn't quite go so far as understanding Neil's joke, in Welsh, about the rugby scores. I don't blame them. Personally, I've never understood rugby, let alone Welsh. The town hall was a relic of the days of Victorian grandeur. But Pontllanfraith leisure centre was the product of a later Labour, communal pride. The feeling in the crowded hall was very much a family affair. It explained Neil Kinnock's confidence and his shared philosophy. Islwyn gave him a background, of shared communal values, of caring. There was a pragmatic consensus there. As he said that night, it gave him 'a solid base to reach out from'. No wonder, perhaps, he, and we, overestimated its appeal for the British public, which she was to reveal as still wallowing in post-imperial trauma syndrome, aka the pits.

○

Thursday night at Walworth Road remained remarkably cheerful even when it became overwhelmingly clear that Vincent Hanna's marginals had changed their minds since they were asked. Cheers greeted the demise of Alliance leaders with no particular concern for whether it was Labour or Tories who had done the deed. Clement Freud had scratched my jalopy at the Knowsley North by-election, squeezing through a too narrow exit, so I did have an unchristianly vengeful thought about it.

The biggest and most thought-provoking event of the day was our victory in the Western Isles. It proved we were the party of the workers and peasants, claimed one amateur pundit. It could mean that we are unequivocally the party of the future. As this government's heady triumphs in tertimundification (the process of converting to Third World status) plunge us to undeveloping status, our economic future is clearly as a nation of crofters grubbing a subsistence in the reclaimed ruins of the factories. In Mrs T's bare new world, our victory in the Western Isles puts us way ahead in the new post-industrial class structure.

○

Somehow even more personally upsetting than the defeat was the scene in Smith Square, where the callous, money-grubbing Tory hordes weren't singing 'The Future Belongs to Us' as they should more appropriately have done. They had not only stolen the future but had purloined Blake's 'Jerusalem' from us. The old visionary, arrested for sedition under Thatcher's predecessors, would, I felt sure, have a poem for it. Even herself was misquoting Kipling's recessional. Kipling had meant it as a warning of hubris to the empire on which the sun never set, and to find it quoted by a comic opera empress of a country modelling itself on the Cayman Islands as an off-shore money well meant the dawn of unreason was well established.

Back at Walworth Road, staff were on parade to be addressed by a disappointed but resilient leader, who invoked the sufferings of others under dictatorship around the world as a reason why we, more fortunate, should carry on.

○

It was a magnificent campaign. I awaited with interest the first 'I told you so' from the dogmatists who had kept their heads down for the duration, but even they would probably be subdued. The values at the core of that campaign were and are what socialism is all about, not any amount of block-voted resolutions. Those values struck a resonant chord in the hearts of socialists. They stand a good chance of drowning out the discordant shrill resolutions of the dogmatists.

If it was so good, why didn't we win? In my last job before quitting the bunker for the unclear winter outside, I looked up Neil's speech in 1985, most memorable for his comments on redundancies and taxi cabs. It stared at me. 'Elections are not won in a matter of weeks, it takes years.' One taxi driver said as I left, 'I love those Heineken and Guinness commercials. But I never drink the stuff.' If we could maintain that campaign with a consistency which led people to believe we meant it, we are on the way.

I headed north, home for the first time for weeks, pondering futures. How do you get a BMW concession in the South?

Ian Williams

Ian Williams worked as a speechwriter for Neil Kinnock during the election campaign.

ROGER WODDIS

Summer of discontent

They tell me summer's arrived, that's official,
A season that's been a long time coming and
  is supposed to be awfully beneficial,
Bringing a warm glow to the cheeks and the
  deafening buzz of hyperkinetic bees,
And nightingales, courtesy Keats, singing like
  crazy in full-throated ease,
Not to mention skirts as short as fashion
  and modesty will allow.
Your chosen subject is the summer solstice:
  you have two minutes, starting . . . *now* —
This is a time when the lucky ones who've
  been working and are fit to drop
Dream of Greece or, having a thing about
  foreigners, a cottage in Cornwall, though
  Shakespeare's 'fantastic summer's heat' was
  a bit over the top.
But let's not be pessimistic or wonder in dismay
  with FitzGerald, 'Where leaves the Rose
  of Yesterday?'
When fate holds up three fingers and everything
  seems to be coming up blue,
The best thing is to button up your overcoat
  and hold up two.

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The wall must go

West Berlin

LAST WEEK Ronald Reagan stepped up on to a bullet-proof dais about 20 yards in front of the Berlin wall and did his best to emulate his predecessor's famous 'Ich bin ein Berliner' speech of 24 years ago. It's doubtful whether even MGM could have provided a better backdrop. Directly behind the President stood the wall and the portals of Berlin's symbolic Brandenburg Gate, while jackbooted East German border guards toting Kalashnikovs milled about looking very much the uninvited guests. On the Western side of the wall a crowd of some 25,000 carefully vetted West Berliners waved paper Stars and Stripes and cheered as Reagan issued a direct challenge to Mikhail Gorbachev: 'If you seek peace, if you seek prosperity for the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, if you seek liberalisation,' Reagan said, 'Mr Gorbachev, open this gate, Mr Gorbachev, tear down this wall.'

Only hours before a gang of decorators had been busy painting over the words 'Reagan go home' that had been scrawled on the Berlin wall overnight. At the same time more than 15,000 West Berliners had taken to the streets for a demonstration against Reagan's visit that ended in ugly clashes with the police. There were more than 300 arrests, dozens of banks and stores were attacked and looted and a force of 10,000 riot police used tear gas, water cannon and baton charges to quell the violence. Much of the rioting was initiated by groups of black-clad anarchist and autonomous groups wearing ski masks — for whom Berlin's governing mayor Eberhard Diepgen recently coined the title anti-Berliners. A far cry indeed from the heady days of 1963, when two years after the building of the Berlin wall, John F. Kennedy was showered with confetti as he drove through West Berlin in an open-topped limousine.

Allied officials have been at pains to explain the causes behind this apparent widespread aversion to President Reagan and his policies in a city like West Berlin, which owes its security to the Americans and the other Western allies. They suggest that it's because of the absence of any direct threat to West Berlin by the Soviet Union since the signing of the 1971 Four-Power Berlin Agreement which has stabilised the city's political position. Others have advanced a multitude of reasons for the violence, ranging from unemployment and the frustration felt by West Germany's small no-future youth generation to disillusionment with US policies on disarmament and human rights. Not insignificant is the chance offered by such demonstrations to have a go at the conservative-ruled state seen as embodied in baton-wielding riot police.

For the authorities in East Berlin, however, the West Berlin rioting arrived like a long-awaited thunderstorm in a drought. State-controlled East German television and newspapers have given the events extensive coverage and depicted West Berlin as a city besieged by riot police and a state of virtual civil war. Given the reactionary style of the East German government and media, it's not difficult to understand why. Ronald Reagan wasn't the first person to demand the destruction of the Berlin wall last week. The call was chanted repeatedly by thousands of young East Berliners who, for three nights in a row, had gathered only yards from where Reagan was to speak on the East Berlin side of the wall in an attempt to hear some of the music being played by David Bowie, The Eurythmics and Genesis on the other side of the wall in West Berlin. Their way was blocked by hundreds of green uniformed people's Police backed by plainclothed state security men.

What started as an innocent attempt to listen to some live Western rock music ended in a political protest and violence. Thousands chanted in unison 'Die Mauer muss weg' — the wall must go — and 'Gorbachev' in a reference to the Soviet leader's policy of *glasnost*, which has been all but dismissed as totally irrelevant by the East German leadership. In the most violent clashes on the evening of Whit Monday, the East German police and state security snatch squads hauled off scores of protesters, many of whom were subjected to a ritual beating and up to 18 hours detention. Three West German correspondents were also roughed up by the police and one photographer was subjected to police truncheon blows. The official East German media responded to the events with a statement flatly denying that any incidents had taken place.

East Germany has not seen spontaneous protests such as these in at least 10 years. The fact that they were made by the first generation of East German young people who are not only thoroughbred products of the first 'worker and peasant state on German soil' but also not old enough to remember the building of the wall is doubtless causing considerable concern to the old guard regime led by 74-year-old Erich Honecker. Paradoxically, it's the regime's policy of limited openness to the West combined with harsh travel restrictions for East Germans themselves that are the root of the problem. It's estimated that 80 per cent of East Germans spend their listening or viewing time tuned in to West German radio and television. At the same time all but a small handful are forbidden to visit the West. It's hardly surprising that when favourite Western rock stars play on the other side of the Berlin wall, young people will identify the wall's builders as the culprits.

The other factor that prompted calls for Gorbachev during last week's protest is the failure of the East German government to move in the direction of *glasnost*. A leading East German Politburo member went out of his way last month to dismiss the Soviet policy with disdain. 'Just because our neighbour has put up new wallpaper, that doesn't mean that we have to follow suit,' he said. In the meantime Russian language editions of *Pravda* carrying Gorbachev's speeches have been selling out in East Berlin because the official East German media has baulked at reporting them.

'Reagan go home' is not the only comment to have been scrubbed off the walls in Berlin in recent days. In East Berlin the authorities have been busy ripping down stickers carrying the photograph of the Soviet leader.

Tony Paterson

Tony Paterson works for the BBC.
News space has been cut this week to allow for post-election coverage. There'll be more next week.

NEW STATESMAN INDEX

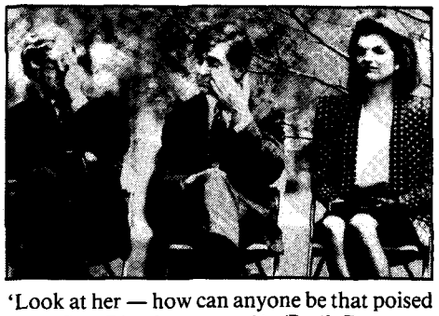
Indexes to Vols 108, 109, 110, 111 and 112 are now available, price £2.50 *each* (incl. p&p). Send remittance to **New Statesman (Index), Foundation House, Perseverance Works, 38 Kingsland Road, London E2 8BA.**

If the caption fits

No 22

David Frost's breakfast TV show has copied the caption contest idea, which is the sincerest form of rip-off. This week they had a picture of Ronald Reagan shaking hands with John Paul II and enquiring 'And how is Mrs Pope?' You can do better than that. Go to it, by Monday 29 June for publication, on payment of £10 book token, on 3 July.

No 20: winner



'Look at her — how can anyone be that poised at a Sex Pistols concert?' *(Basil Ransome-Davies, Hitchin.)*

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But (s)he does not understand . . .

JIMMY REID *on the frustrations of being Scottish after 11 June*

Glasgow

'FOR THE first time in my life, like many other Scots, I'm seriously pondering whether Scotland can, or should, remain part of the United Kingdom . . . My genuine concern is whether the political divergence now manifest between the two nations makes the Union untenable.'

These words were written by me in a Scottish newspaper on 11 June 1983, in the immediate aftermath of that year's general election which again had confirmed a trend discernible from the mid-'50s. A pattern of voting was emerging: Scotland was rejecting the politics of the Tories.

Scotland has overwhelmingly rejected Thatcherism, yet is now to be governed by English Thatcherites. Mrs Thatcher's response is disingenuously to argue that 'England had to submit to being governed by a Labour government when Conservatives had the majority. Really, what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander.'

This is the attitude of a big-nation chauvinist. She misses, or chooses to miss, the point. In a unitary state which embraces more than one nation, arithmetic counts for a lot. Last week Labour got 42.39 per cent. of the votes cast in Scotland. The Tories got a similar percentage of the votes cast in the United Kingdom and have a large majority at Westminster. She might not have noticed, but the Scots are outnumbered. A party can have little or no support in Scotland and still be elected to govern by the overwhelming numbers south of the border.

In the past it didn't matter much. Different nations can co-exist within the same state if the peoples share roughtly the same values and views as to how the country should be governed, or where contending political opinions are spread within and throughout the different nations. *This no longer applies in the United Kingdom. Thatcherism has ended this unwritten and tacitly accepted consensus which underpinned the integrity of the United Kingdom.*

A unique history

To Scots, and not just to *socialist* Scots, Thatcherism is an alien philosophy. A few months ago a Scottish businessman in his late 30s, a millionaire with offices in Edinburgh and London, told me of his concern for our country. Most of his kind in Scotland, he said, didn't want further reductions in income tax. They would rather the cash was used to create jobs and improve public services. On his weekly visits to London he was appalled by those in the City who didn't give a damn and wanted to grab everything for themselves. The middle class, and even the Yuppies in Scotland (we do have them), are in the main anti-Thatcher. In the general election, the Tories lost seats dominated by such groups.

The reason for this has little to do with the ideological work of the labour movement. The roots go much deeper. Scotland, like all nations

What can Labour do?

Edinburgh

IF THERE was one person looking even more miserable than the Scottish Secretary Malcolm Rifkind last Friday morning, it was his Labour Shadow, Donald Dewar. Ironically, the Labour Party's much-heralded election victory north of the border has landed the ultra-cautious Mr Dewar with almost as many problems as his quick-witted Conservative counterpart.

Rifkind's difficulties are obvious. He has lost 11 MPs, six to Labour, three to the Scottish National Party (SNP) and two to the Alliance. He now has to try to govern Scotland with the aid of just nine (often unemployable) colleagues in the face of opposition from the other 62 Scottish MPs (50 Labour, nine Alliance and three SNP). His party's share of the vote in Scotland has dropped by over 4 points to just 24 per cent.

There is no way of interpreting this other than as a clear rejection of Thatcherism and all that it implies north of the border. The Scots have firmly voted against the replacement of the rates by poll tax and the privatisation of the electricity industry. They have voted in favour of measures to curb unemployment and the establishment of a devolved Scottish Assembly.

Donald Dewar's problem is that the Conservatives can use their massive English majority to override Scots opposition. Labour could then be politically vulnerable to the SNP, whose constant accusations of impotence might finally stick.

That is why, at the weekend, Labour was quick to announce its first steps in a popular campaign to persuade the Conservative government to change its policies in Scotland. Donald Dewar demanded a meeting with Malcolm Rifkind before the Queen's Speech to ask how he is planning to respond to the country's clearly expressed wishes.

The Labour Party is holding a 'Rally for Scottish Democracy' on Glasgow Green in August and is planning a major demonstration on jobs in the autumn in conjunction with the Labour movement from the North of England. It hopes to establish a high-powered group, including representatives from local authorities and the trade union movement to co-ordinate action. It plans to introduce into Parliament its already-drafted Bill to set up a Scottish Assembly with tax-raising powers. Other, more ambitious, ways of 'augmenting the democratic mandate of the Scottish people' are also being privately considered.

Labour's plan of action is its initial answer to the question persistently posed during the election by the SNP: how will Labour use its political power to protect Scotland against Thatcher's third term? It is, in effect, the party's long-awaited response to the now-dawning Doomsday scenario.

There are some indications that the Conservatives might be prepared to bend a little. Senior officials have hinted that they could respond to a demonstrable demand for devolution and Malcolm Rifkind has said that 'the electorate is always right'. It would certainly be in the party's political interest to undermine the widely-held belief that it is 'anti-Scottish'.

If, however, it does not bend, Dewar could face increasing pressure from within his own ranks for more radical forms of action, including disruptive parliamentary tactics and perhaps even civil disobedience. He and others in the party hierarchy would be unlikely to approve of such tactics.

Another problem for Labour is the extent to which it involves other political parties in its campaign. The party's Scottish chair, Bill Speirs, made it clear this week that, although joint initiatives were unlikely, Labour would welcome support from those in any other party except the SNP. The Nationalists, he pointed out, had run a predominantly anti-Labour campaign yet had lost two seats to Labour. They were, he argued, a political irrelevance in Scotland.

The SNP of course would not agree. It ended the election with one more MP than it began with and its share of the vote increased by over two points to 14 per cent. The Alliance (share of the vote down five points to 19 per cent) also complains about Labour's claim to represent Scotland.

On Monday the Scottish Liberal leader, Sir Russell Johnston, repeated David Steel's assertion that the Tories had lost their moral authority to rule Scotland. He went so far as to say that if they refused to respond to the democratic demands of the Scottish people, there was a risk of political violence. Such an alarming prediction, it has to be said, is not entirely the product of a fevered imagination.

Rob Edwards

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has a history unique to itself, a history which includes a strong collectivist tradition. T. C. Smout in his *History of the Scottish People* describes the kinship of the clan as 'a complex one, compounded both of egalitarian and of patriarchal features, full of respect for birth while being free from humility. It appeared uncouth beyond Scotland mainly because it was a legacy of Celtic influence unfamilar to the outside world.'

The individualist trend is also there, interacting dialectically with the collectivist: a splendid and natural phenomenon not sufficiently recognised by socialists, fundamental to the Scottish radical tradition. This is the heritage of Scottish Labour, given a new dimension by the actual circumstances of its birth. The industrial revolution in the central belt of Scotland, from the Clyde to the Forth and northeast to Dundee, was based on coal, steel, shipbuilding and heavy engineering. This brought many thousands of workers together in large-scale enterprise. The collectivist tradition thus found new meaning, strength and power and ineradicably shaped the future politics of Scotland. The labour movement was to become the most decisive social force, and still is to an extent never reached in England.

There are fears among Scots that we are now witnessing in England a lurch to the authoritarian right which has about it the smack of permanence. It raises the question: *can a governmental union of two nations survive if it transpires that the peoples have fundamentally different perceptions as to how they want to live their lives?*

The tensions are there for all to see. A constitutional crisis is inevitable. Either the two nations go their separate ways, or Scotland is given a degree of self-government within the framework of the United Kingdom sufficient to ensure the democratically expressed wishes of its people are not completely frustrated.

Labour in Scotland is justifiably jubilant at its greatest electoral victory. Yet if Labour cannot defend the Scottish people from the ravages of Thatcherism imposed on them by the electors of England, then why in future vote Labour? This is the Doomsday scenario, and the problems for Labour in acting its part within it are immense. There is talk of obstructing the work of Parliament, but a lot of water has passed under Westminster Bridge since Parnell and his boyos were up to their filibustering tricks. The rules have been changed and Thatcher will make further changes, if necessary.

Some raise the spectre of extra-parliamentary activity and others recoil in horror. I don't know what the fuss is about. The CBI, TUC, SPUC, CND and a host of other respectable organisations are engaged in extra-parliamentary activity, all part of the democratic process. Not a minority trying to bring down a democratically elected government, but a movement telling the governors that a particular policy no longer enjoys, if it ever did, popular support. At the very least, there must be such a movement led by Labour, but embracing all sections of the Scottish nation demanding a devolved parliament for Scotland.

Taking the fight south

This fight has to be taken into England, and here is where Scottish Labour MPs will run into trouble. The chauvinist arrogance of Thatcher to the legitimate national aspirations of the Scots can often be matched by the ignorance of English socialists. In the words of Rudyard Kipling, 'We've drunk to our English brother (But he does not understand)'. Like Thatcher our English brother makes absurd comparisons. He confuses the predicament of Scotland with the regions of anti-Toryism in England which also feel mightily aggrieved. Scotland, however, is not part of England, but a national entity.

The case is predicated in principle. The governmental structures of Britain must recognise the fact of Scottish nationhood. The Scots must have powers to govern themselves in all matters which can be devolved from Westminster. Such powers are necessary to prevent the culture and sense of national identity of the small nation being engulfed, not deliberately, but by the sheer numbers of its much larger neighbour.

There are, it is no secret, varying degrees of enthusiasm for devolution among Scottish Labour MPs. Some are wholly committed to it: others are utterly wedded to Westminster. A Scottish Assembly with real powers would inevitably divert some meaningful authority to Edinburgh, and this poses as many problems as opportunities for Scots politicians. If, for example, Scots are given exclusive rights to determine educational policy for Scotland, should Scottish MPs at Westminster have a say in deciding educational policy for England? Should the Scottish Secretary come from the Westminster or Edinburgh parliament? Worrying considerations for the career-minded. Will they be in the right place at the right time?

Who cares? If the pressure for home rule comes, to use an out-of-fashion phrase, from the grass roots, these technical details will be sorted out. I'm hopeful. On this issue Thatcher is not impregnable. She has no real ideological base in Scotland and is leader of the Conservative and *unionist* party. She wants to go down in history as the Tory who tamed the unions, and not the destroyer of the *union*.

Let there be no doubt this is what's at stake: devolution or the right to secede. It's difficult to see how this can be denied. Is a nation which freely enters into a Union with another nation ever free to leave? The answer has to be yes: particularly if its people are having forced on them alien values and a way of life they reject. □

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Labour's future: decline or democratic revolution?

Can Labour ever hope to govern alone again? **PETER KELLNER** *argues there are now choices the party — and Neil Kinnock — must make*

LET US START with the good news. Labour ran an outstanding election campaign. Neil Kinnock made party supporters feel good to identify with Labour once more. Everyone that mattered toed the same line. The party's election broadcasts and newspaper advertisements were brilliant. By last week, Mr Kinnock looked like a potential Prime Minister.

The bad news is that, despite all this, Labour ended up with less than 32 per cent of the votes cast in Great Britain. It remained 8 points — almost three million votes — short of what it needs to form a majority government. If that is the best Labour can do at the end of its most professional ever election, the outcome of a more conventional campaign does not bear thinking about.

Three months ago (*NS* 20 March) I argued that Labour's

> 1983 performance was artificially depressed by Labour's internal feuds, weak leadership and incompetent campaigning. But there is little evidence to support a view that Labour's 'natural' level of support was any more than 33-34 per cent then. Given the demographic changes that have taken place since, that implies a figure of 31-32 per cent today.

So things turned out. Labour has experienced not so much a recovery as a remission. It is back on course, and the course points towards long-term decline. Home-ownership is spreading; so is share-ownership. Traditional manual work is giving way to the more fragmented, less unionised world of service employment. On present trends, Labour will do well to stay above 30 per cent at the next election.

Out of the citadels

That need not mean destruction. Labour may tighten its hold on Scotland's central belt and the northern cities. If it recaptures Mossley Hill from David Alton, the party will then hold every seat in Glasgow, Liverpool, Manchester and Newcastle. It also represents all but the most middle-class suburbs of Leeds, Sheffield and Edinburgh.

These citadels are all valuable, but they do not begin to provide enough MPs to give Labour power. Rather, they illustrate a more awkward point. Labour must gain more than 70 seats next time to become the largest party, and 100 to secure a clear majority. Few of these seats are to be found in Labour's traditional areas: they belong to the party already.

Instead, Labour must gain extra votes in large numbers outside its citadels. In the North that means capturing suburbs and small towns like Blackpool, Chester, Davyhulme (Winston Churchill's constituency), Stockport, Tynemouth and Wallasey. In the Midlands, Labour needs to win four Birmingham seats — again, not the natural working-class seats that Labour now holds, but those with large numbers of skilled workers (like Northfield) or middle-class electors (like Selly Oak and Hall Green).

In London, Labour must double its representation, from 23 to 46. Some seats are gradually moving Labour's way demographically, like Streatham, Dulwich and Hornsey & Wood Green. But these are balanced by seats that are becoming inexorably more yuppy-Tory areas, like Battersea and Fulham.

In the South, outside London, Labour's targets for 1991 read like a roll-call of Thatcher's Britain:

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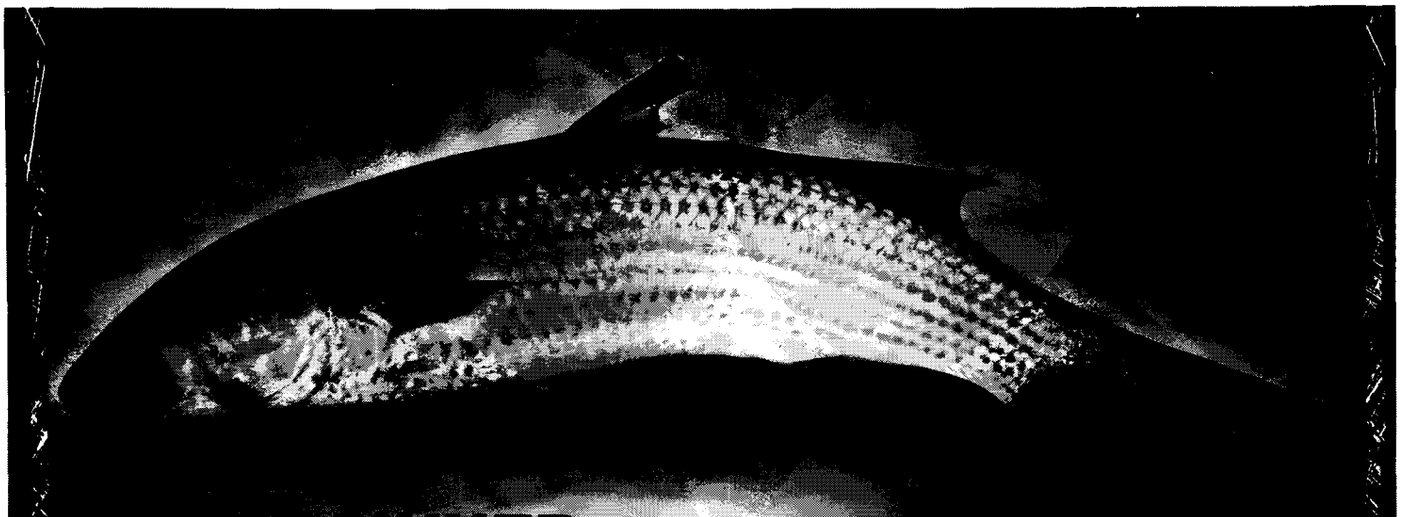

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NOT VERY LONG AGO THE AMAZON WAS A MAGNIFICENT RIVER.

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BUT IT'S NOT JUST THE FISH THAT ARE SUFFERING. THE CONSEQUENCES OF DESTROYING A RIVER ARE MUCH FURTHER REACHING.

OVER HALF A MILLION BRAZILIAN FISHERPEOPLE DEPEND ON THE FISH IN THE AMAZON FOR A LIVING AND ALSO FOR FOOD.

NOW THEIR FOOD IS CONTAMINATED, THEIR LIVELIHOOD HAS BEEN DESTROYED AND THEY ARE ON THE VERGE OF STARVATION.

YET DESPITE THE FACT THAT THESE FISHERMEN PRODUCE MORE THAN HALF THE COUNTRY'S FISH, THE AUTHORITIES HAVE DONE VIRTUALLY NOTHING TO CURB THE POLLUTION.

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places that know unemployment, but where the building societies have more clients than the job centres, and tax cuts have helped to pay for British Gas shares. They include: Bristol North-West, Cambridge, Dover, Harlow, Gloucestershire West, Gravesham, Luton South, Peterborough, Plymouth Drake, both Southampton seats, Stroud, Swindon and Waveney. If Labour cannot win seats like these, it can forget the idea of ever governing again.

The false majority

Two reasons are sometimes offered for optimism. The easier to dispose of is the argument that all Labour needs to do is get off its knees and 'fight for our class like the Tories fight for theirs'. To support this view, the large swings to Labour in Liverpool are apt to be cited. Arthur Scargill effectively made this point at the weekend when he complained of being gagged during the campaign. In the constituencies he spoke at, he said, there was a strong swing to Labour; had it been repeated throughout Britain, Labour would now be in power.

The miners' leader might be a dab hand at rousing the committed where Labour is already strong; I have seen no evidence that he can win converts elsewhere. His record of sustaining the membership of the NUM should give him pause for thought before he condemns Mr Kinnock's record of sustaining Labour's vote. In fact, Labour gained ground where the Tories have ravaged the economy most; the ideology of the local candidate had little or no bearing on the matter.

The second optimistic proposition is that there is a large anti-Conservative majority in the electorate. 13.8 million people voted Tory, but 18 million voted Labour, Alliance, Green or Nationalist. If only those 18 million could be harnessed next time, the Tories would lose.

It is a seductive argument, but also a double-edged one. There is a non-Tory majority of 4.2 million; but by the same token there is a non-Labour majority of 11.7 million. We cannot assume that the people who voted neither Labour nor Tory would prefer Mr Kinnock to Mrs Thatcher. The available polling evidence suggests that, if forced to choose, they divide down the middle, without any great enthusiasm for either.

The point can be put more strongly. While it is true that the divisions in the non-Conservative vote have allowed Mrs Thatcher to remain in power, it is equally true that the divisions in the non-Labour vote allowed Mr Kinnock to lead a contingent of as many as 229 MPs. In 1931, when Labour secured roughly the same support as last week, it won only 52 seats. The difference is that then Labour fought directly against the Tories in most places. In a two-party election, a vote of just over 30 per cent means near-extinction; in a three-party election it means a respectable number of MPs at Westminster.

The task, therefore, of constructing an effective anti-Conservative majority must be approached with the same care that is needed to defuse an unexploded bomb. One false move and we are all dead; and time is not on our side.

Tuscan pacts

Labour's choice is simply stated. It can either come to terms with the Alliance, or seek to marginalise it. What Labour cannot do is evade that choice and wait for better times; the likeliest consequence of that would be more of the same: a fourth Tory term, a divided opposition and a further demographic tilt downhill for Labour. The party would still hold 150 or 200 seats. It would be strong enough to prevent any other non-Tory party from emerging. That would be highly satisifying for those who regard the puncturing of Dr Owen's ego as an adequate substitute for winning power. For those with a more serious purpose it would be a disaster. The choice is inescapable, and whichever way it goes the consequences will be monumental.

The first option — coming to terms with the Alliance — could take a number of forms. The most ambitious would be some sort of coalition of radicals, in which Labour and the Liberals fight the next election on a common programme for government. (I take it as read that as long as Dr Owen wields power in the Alliance, the notion of a deal is even more far-fetched than my scenario envisages already. For the purposes of what follows I assume that the Liberals either take over the SDP or cast it aside.)

'The defence issue is probably immune to rational persuasion. Voters want Britain to stay nuclear not because it makes sense but because It Keeps Britain Great. Britain's Bomb is not a weapon of defence; it is a national phallus sheathed in the Union Jack. As long as this remains so, Labour cannot win power by renouncing it'

If Neil Kinnock, John Smith, David Steel and Paddy Ashdown were to sit down together with some bottles of good wine for a long summer afternoon in the hills of Tuscany, there is much they would agree on. Their personalities and their politics are not identical, but they are compatible. It is not their different objectives, or even competing personal ambitions, that present the main obstacle to co-operation. It is their parties.

Is that reason enough to stay apart? If most of Labour and most of the Liberals share common ground on economic growth, social welfare and a host of libertarian, human rights issues, should they not at least contemplate the idea of a radical coalition? Unlike tactical voting, which is negative and unprincipled, a Lib-Lab programme could be both positive and principled.

The hardest part for Labour to swallow would not have anything to do with domestic policy, nor even defence. It would be the electoral system. A pre-election pact might yield 300 Labour and 50 Liberals MPs when the nation next votes. No Liberal could take his party into such a coalition without an agreement to some kind of electoral reform — which would mean the following election producing, say, 220 Labour and 130 Liberal MPs.

On the other hand, such a prize would surely tempt the Liberal leadership way beyond its present modest dreams. Freed from the hazards of trying to satisfy Dr Owen, it might well concede ground on almost every other policy issue.

From Labour's point of view, however, a commitment to electoral reform means one thing above all else. The party would have to abandon all hope of ever governing alone again. Stated as baldly as that, it sounds too final and too terrible a prospect to contemplate. But wait: is that not merely an abrupt way of stating what many of us feel in our bones to be true, but are reluctant to admit? Is it not the sad fact that Labour's greatest feasible ambition is to deny the Tories outright victory next time?

Suppose Labour's natural support by 1991 is 30 per cent; and suppose that even the best-planned campaign cannot lift it above 35 per cent; then the most our present election system can offer Labour is a hung Parliament, and that is less likely than the continued hegemony of the Conservatives.

Staying national

If that is so, then the case for resisting electoral reform crumbles away. We are told that first-past-the-post binds MPs to their communities and that it ensures stability. Either statement, or both, may be true, but they are beside the point. (The stability argument is surely counterproductive these days: for 'stability' read 'large Tory majorities with 43 per cent of the vote'.)

Labour's case for retaining first-past-the-post has nothing to do with high-minded principles; it is about electing a Labour government with the least possible support compatible with some kind of democratic mandate. First-past-the-post is the only available system west of the Iron Curtain that allows majority governments to be formed with less than 40 per cent of the vote. However, we may now have reached the point where this system is capable of delivering majority Tory governments, but not majority Labour ones.

So on grounds of self-interest alone, electoral reform cannot be dismissed out of hand. It offers to swap a distant and receding prospect of total power for a clear likelihood of partial power. And as long as Labour remained the senior partner in a radical coalition, Labour's policies would predominate. Or, to put the point in more practical terms, a Labour-led government would be far less likely to be blown off course by the Liberals than by events.

There is one other reason to consider electoral reform. Labour aspires to be a national party. Yet in southern England outside London it has only three MPs despite obtaining more than one-sixth of the vote. It suffers rather as the Alliance suffers nationally. Given that some of Labour's natural supporters voted tactically last week, Labour's real share of support in the South is 20-25 per cent. Under PR that would entitle it to 35-45 MPs. Labour could then start to dispel its image of a party confined to barracks far from Westminster.

That option, then, is to embrace electoral reform and construct a radical alliance with the Liberals; Labour's distinctive task would be to implement as many of its democratic socialist

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ideals as it could. It would be a half-a-loaf-is-better-than-no-bread strategy.

Defence costs

Labour's alternative remains to go for the whole loaf. Pre-election deals, pacts or understandings with the Liberals would be out. Electoral reform would stay off the agenda. All would be staked on winning Gravesham and Waveney (not to mention Worcester and Chorley and Peterborough). It means bending the curve of 20th-century political history even more massively than Mrs Thatcher has done.

Is it possible? We know what an outstanding leader, inspired campaigning tactics and a remarkable advertising and publicity strategy can achieve: 32 per cent. But if Labour is to stand any chance of climbing to 40 per cent, the product itself will have to change. Indeed, *the party must change more profoundly if it is to seek outright victory than if it is to embrace electoral reform and coalition rule.*

A Lib-Lab alliance need not require Labour to surrender any of its policies; it could hold true to all its beliefs (including unilateralism) and negotiate with the Liberals either before or after an election about what to implement. On the other hand, to win 40 per cent of the vote on its own, Labour must haul almost three million votes away from the Alliance. Anyone who thinks Labour can do this with its present defence policy or extremist image lives in a fantasy world.

I write this as someone who believes that Labour's defence policy is right for Britain. To me, the possession of nuclear weapons is immoral and their use would be suicidal. Yet for the second election in succession defence has cost Labour votes.

I do not share the editorial view of the *NS* that Labour should or could have changed its policy in the last few months. By that time it was too late; any change would have been cynical and seen to be so. The time to rethink defence is directly after an election defeat: that is, now.

Two aspects must be disentangled: US nuclear weapons based in Britain, and Britain's own 'deterrent'. With a little luck, the first problem will solve itself. By the time of the next election, cruise missiles should have left Britain as part of a Soviet-American agreement. For the time being, all the party can do is wait upon events and avoid offering hostages to fortune. If Reagan and Gorbachev agree, fine; if they don't, then Labour's policy will have to depend on who is to blame. To avoid the charge of fudging the issue, yes, that does mean that Labour could find itself fighting the next election committed to keeping cruise missiles in Britain pending agreement between Moscow and Washington on their removal.

Britain's own nuclear bomb presents an even tougher dilemma. This year the non-nuclear pill could be sweetened with the financial savings from scrapping Trident. By 1991 that money will have been spent. If Labour were still to argue the case for re-equipping Britain's conventional forces, this would require a clear increase in our defence budget. The party would find itself advocating a policy that is simultaneously more expensive than the Tories' and, in the eyes of most voters, less effective. It would risk losing Labour even more votes.

Perhaps Reagan will bail the party out by cancelling Trident, just as 25 years ago President Kennedy embarrassed an earlier Tory government by cancelling Skybolt. But what if Trident goes ahead? It is an evil weapon; but is keeping it too high a price to pay for the return of a majority Labour government able to reduce unemployment, improve our schools and shorten our hospital waiting lists? Not an easy question to answer, but not one the party can duck.

> ***The brutal alternatives facing Labour cannot be evaded: whether to trade with the Liberals or freeze them out of Britain's centre-left terrain. Either choice involves a democratic revolution: in Britain's election system, or in the party itself. If neither takes place, Labour is doomed to continue its steady decline, too weak to win, but too strong to let any other group take over***

The devil of it is that the issue is probably immune to rational persuasion. Voters want Britain to stay nuclear not because it makes sense but because It Keeps Britain Great. Our empire has disappeared, our economy is down the tube, our self-respect has taken a battering, but at least We Have The Bomb.

I predict that before too many years have passed, Britain will be a Bomb-free country; but it will come about either because the Americans pull out of the Trident deal, or because the Conservatives realise that the nuclear game is up. As with the French in Algeria and Nixon in Vietnam: sometimes it takes a right-wing government to destroy illusions of power.

If politics were a fair game, Labour would gain the credit ten or 20 years from now for advocating what by then will seem to be the only sensible defence policy. But politics isn't fair. Britain's Bomb is not a weapon of defence; it is a national phallus sheathed in the Union Jack. As long as this remains so, Labour cannot win power by renouncing it.

One-member-one-vote

Labour's extremist image is more easily dispelled in principle, though doubtless many party members would do their best to prevent that principle being translated into practice. 'Extremism' has certainly been exploited by the media, but the *Sun* did not invent Militant, and nor did the *Daily Mail* conjure *London Labour Briefing* out of thin air. Arthur Scargill, Derek Hatton, Sharon Atkin and Linda Bellos all hold views that, even undistorted, make strong socialists weep.

The fact that none of these people would have the remotest influence on Mr Kinnock if he became prime minister is irrelevant. They are vastly inflated symptoms of a genuine malaise. The voting public sees a party that is neither properly democratic nor effectively authoritarian. Mr Kinnock's main task is not to 'win the argument' or to 'purge the Trots' (although both are necessary and well on the way to implementation). It is to redesign Labour's structure so that he can lead without being dictatorial and ordinary members can participate without being carved up by local caucuses or trade union block votes.

At the heart of reform lies one-member-one-vote. This should apply most obviously to the selection of parliamentary candidates. But the arguments against the present system relate also to the operation of the annual conference and the national executive. Neither is rooted in any serious democratic principle.

The annual conference ought to be transformed into the kind of advisory rally that the other parties hold. Nobody who has ever been to a Labour conference, or watched it for more than five minutes on television, can believe that it is effective at resolving complex policy problems, or democratic in determining which rival view commands majority party support.

One immediate objection is: the unions pay 80 per cent of the party's national costs, so what's in it for them if they are frozen out? The answer is that the question is wrong. It is not *unions* who pay that 80 per cent; it is *levy-paying union members*. One solution is to enfranchise them as individuals in the selection of candidates and councillors.

It would then be logical to give all policy-making powers to councillors at local level and MPs nationally. Each would have been democratically selected, and would be accountable, as they should be, to Labour's membership in its widest sense. By broadening the franchise, the party would make it harder for small groups — left or right, white or black — to impose their will on the rest.

There are doubtless other routes to the same democratic objective. But Mr Kinnock will never have a better opportunity than he has now to transform the party. His election was a personal triumph, even though it was a national disaster. He could certainly get whatever he wants through this year's conference and possibly next year's. After that, an unreformed conference might start to bite back.

Above all, the brutal alternatives facing Labour cannot be evaded: whether to trade with the Liberals or to freeze them out of Britain's centre-left terrain. Either choice involves a democratic revolution: in Britain's election system, or in the party itself. Perhaps both are needed.

If neither takes place, Labour is doomed to continue its steady decline, too weak to win, but too strong to let any other group take over. The millions of people who need a progressive government in order to lead decent lives will be condemned to years more agony. They will wait, many in despair, many in pain, many undernourished, many cold in winter — wait for a new politics to serve them.

What sort of new politics will that be? I hope it will be democratic, but I cannot be sure. □

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The next moves forward

JOHN RENTOUL *on the policies and politicians jostling for preferment*

THE CONSERVATIVE Party will very quickly forget how unlikely the landslide seemed. Already Bruce Anderson of the *Sunday Telegraph* has called Margaret Thatcher 'one of the greatest women who ever lived', and likened her to Elizabeth I of England. In the same newspaper Jock Bruce-Gardyne, a Thatcher peer, licked the hand that fed him and likened its owner to Charles de Gaulle.

But the crushing victory may have a stultifying effect on the party, allowing it to postpone internal reform and to press ahead in government with policies for which it assumes it has a mandate.

Wets dampened

The thorough overhaul of the party's organisation that is needed is unlikely to happen. Norman Tebbit will stay as party chairman until after this autumn's party conference, when he is expected to be replaced by Lord Young, by which time any post-election impetus for change will have fizzled out. What the party needs, say MPs privately, is a chief executive to match the Labour Party's Larry Whitty and a campaign director to match the Labour Party's Peter Mandelson — not wishful thinking about recruiting members in the inner cities, to which Tebbit intends to devote the next six months.

Last week's landslide was also a catastrophe for the left wing of the Tory party. Just like the Labour Party, Tory wets now face another four years in the wilderness. The election 'went a bit too well', says one wet MP. Although Peter 'Hangman' Bruinvels and Warren 'Flogger' Hawksley may have lost their seats, many of the vociferously right-wing intake of 1983 held on to seats they never expected to win four years ago and were confidently preparing to lose last week.

If Mrs Thatcher had won a majority of two last week instead of 102, a lot of talk of ensuring that there was just one left-wing candidate for the party leadership could have been put into practice. If she had resigned or had been successfully challenged, the run-off would probably have been between Foreign Secretary Geoffrey Howe on the right and Education Secretary Kenneth Baker on the left. But now — barring accidents or a deterioration in Denis Thatcher's health — it looks as if the next leadership election will be five or six years away. By then Baker will be approaching 60, and the leading contenders are likely to be MPs who look quite unlikely now.

The darling of the wets is Chris Patten, 43, currently a junior Foreign Office minister (not to be confused with ex-housing now Home Office minister John Patten), whose Roman Catholicism is more likely to obstruct his progress to the top than his wetness. Darling of the dries is Angela Rumbold, 54, a junior education minister who could be Thatcher's first (other) woman Cabinet member, ahead of Lynda Chalker and Edwina Currie, but who is violently unpopular on the left of the party. Any leadership candidate needs broader appeal in a party at least as riven by sectarianism as Labour or the Alliance, but which is better at hiding it.

Chris Duggan

'One of the greatest women who ever lived' — *Sunday Telegraph* .

More promising of the 'next-generation' candidates are the three John Ms promoted in or to the Cabinet at the weekend: John Moore, 49, John Major, 44 and John MacGregor, 50. All three are 'reliably understood to have impressed the Prime Minister', and so it can be assumed that they are being tested as possible heirs to a Thatcherite Succession (although the latter two need more telegenic spectacles).

Escape routes

The testing grounds for completion of the Thatcher Revolution are education and health. Much depends on the success or failure of the schools opting-out plan, the inclusion of which in the manifesto nearly tripped up Thatcher and Baker in the election campaign. The wets pray that it will fail, and the new Conservative Education Association has expressed its 'deep concern' about allowing schools to opt out of local council control. It is not keen on City Technology Colleges either: 'What we are looking for is a One Nation approach to education, not escape routes for the few,' says spokesperson Demitri Argyropolu. One wet MP points out that the opt-out provision will mostly be taken up by schools faced with closure because of falling pupil populations: 'There are not many Tory votes in Tory parents objecting about Tory local education authorities to a Tory Secretary of State.'

The dries, on the other hand, believe that the

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Great Education Reform Bill will succeed. One right-winger believes it could be a 'big winner, the educational equivalent of council house sales': it will enable schools to pay good teachers more and it will give parents real power over the character of opted-out (direct-grant) schools.

The idea took shape after the right's defeats on education vouchers (giving parents a voucher for the average state spending per pupil and letting them spend it as they please) and later on the abolition of the Inner London Education Authority. Practical problems made reform at the level of the individual parent or of the education authority impossible. But when Madsen Pirie, president of the Adam Smith Institute, wrote a pamphlet for the No Turning Back group of right-wing MPs urging the contracting-out of whole schools, it was taken up by Andrew Turner on the education desk at Conservative Central Office. Turner, a right-winger, drafted the education section of the manifesto and was surprised when Baker accepted the contracting-out plan and subsequently promoted it as his own.

The next challenge for the right will be to apply a similar principle to the 'reform' of the National Health Service. The appointment of John Moore as Health and School Services Secretary opens the way for the ideological assault. Moore was a blue-eyed lefty under Edward Heath, but successfully made the transition to steel-blue free-marketeer as minister for privatisation in the Treasury from 1983-86.

Private ideas

The shape of the assault can be dimly made out. As Peter Clarke, *Diverse* reporter and author of the *New Enlightenment*, puts it: 'The Tory party doesn't have ideas, it buys them in. It gets them from a series of specialist shops, the leading boutique of which is the Institute of Economic Affairs.' So, over to the IEA, under the new management of Graham Mather, formerly of the Institute of Directors. 'We cannot have the health service declared a no-go area,' he says. 'The NHS seems to have a crisis every year at about the time of Tory party conference.' But, as in education, wholesale privatisation is not a viable political option. The IEA has promoted the idea of partial contracting out from the NHS into American-style 'health maintenance organisations', which provide both health insurance and a family doctor service. The emphasis is on preventive medicine to cut the cost of insuring against private hospital treatment.

How much progress this kind of scheme can make against the political invulnerability of the NHS depends on John Moore's political skill and the resources available from John Major, the new 'Minister for Cuts'. Wets and dries in the Tory party — as well as the opposition parties — are agreed that 'something must be done' about the restrictive practices of the medical profession, the stranglehold of the consultants. But the only hope for the wet approach to the NHS — 'raising standards in general rather than creating more winners' according to one leftwinger — is that more resources can be found to avoid the year-after-year real cuts that have been made in the highly visible South East.

With the composition of the parliamentary Conservative Party unchanged, complacent Conservative Associations in the country and short memories of how precarious Thatcher's majority in the Commons once seemed, the Tories are not well placed if anything goes wrong in the next four years. □

AFTER THE ELECTION: THE ALLIANCE

Hairshirt politics

PATRICK FORBES *on the people of talent and goodwill*

'THE TROUBLE with Roy is that he doesn't know what a hairshirt looks like,' confided Jeremy Thorpe in 1981, discussing the prospects for the Alliance. Six years on, Roy Jenkins certainly knows what a hairshirt looks like. And the Alliance is going to be wearing one for some time.

Clippings file to hand, last week Fleet Street gleefully reported the demise of Roy Jenkins' 'experimental aeroplane', as the Alliance was humiliated at the polls. Fleet Street was right. For the experiment was not merely about appealing to, and enfranchising 'reasonable people'; it was also about getting them in power. Thus Jenkins at his 1979 Dimbleby lecture:

> I believe that the new electorate can tell a 'hawk from a handsaw' and that if it saw a new grouping with cohesion and relevant policies, it might be more attracted by this new reality than by the old labels which had become increasingly irrelevant . . . Such a new development could bring into political commitment the energies of many people of talent and goodwill . . . at present alienated from the business of government.

In the heady, early days, Social Democrats thought that the people were going to entrust them with the powers of state. Indeed their whole philosophy was based on that assumption. 'Winning was everything to them,' said one disgusted Liberal last weekend. However, the Liberals had arrived at a similar position by a different route — self-denial. If they were sensible, dropped their obsession with such arcanae as a 'no growth economy', or site value rating, then power would be theirs.

As the results of last week make painfully clear, the aeroplane's design was fundamentally flawed. Neither self-denial, nor a vague appeal to the middle ground is sufficiently compelling for a loose alliance of two parties to unsettle a solid Tory vote, or a Labour vote still wedded to its party, under the current electoral system. 'The assumption made at the beginning of the campaign that we could replace the Labour Party as the party of the left, and it was a mistake we all made, was idiotic,' was how one fervent Owenite saw it last week. Since electoral reform is not on the government's agenda, the parties must first remould and then resign themselves to a long exile on the fringes of politics.

Merge and/or die

First and foremost they must merge. The lesson of the doorsteps was clear: 'A dual benefit strategy doesn't work,' said one Liberal versed in the language of adspeak.

Senior Liberals have long been convinced of the benefits of merger, as Steel made clear with his talk of 'democratic fusion' last weekend. Traditionally he's been opposed by radical elements in his own party: the Association of Liberal Councillors (ALC), the Young Liberals — and, crucially, the SDP. However, such was the scale of last week's disaster, Steel may find he has some unexpected allies. Last weekend prominent ALC members were admitting privately that they were prepared

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to countenance merger 'provided the terms are right'. And there is now a substantial group on the SDP National Committee that favours merger, numbering three of the Gang of Four (Jenkins, Rodgers and Williams) among its members.

Only David Owen stands in the way. 'Merge and die' are his reported views on the subject. Monday's decision to postpone discussion of merger was Owen's doing. 'He's digging his heels in — the atmosphere was pretty bloody awful', said one Committee member. 'All this stuff about consulting the membership is nonsense. You can't do it in two weeks.'

Anticipating Steel's appeal, Owenite loyalists were anxiously briefing journalists last week, myself included: 'Liberals are going to say that we've got to merge, but that's stupid. The Liberals are too broad a church. What have we got in common with those bearded lunatics in the ALC? And don't underestimate the extent to which the Liberals are responsible for our joint failure. There was the defence split last year, and this year you can blame the muddled manifesto on Alan Beith [the Liberals' deputy leader] — he wrote it.'

Accordingly, the parties' second task is clear. They must rid themselves of David Owen. Senior Liberals confirmed last week that this was Steel's intention: 'He'll stay on till he's outmanoeuvred Owen.' And for once the balance of power lies with Steel, both in terms of parliamentary seats, and the arguments.

Owen has tried to head off talk of merger by traditional means. First the *carrot*; over the weekend he talked loosely of a 'federation of the two parties'. This proposal has attracted predictable, and justified, derision. 'Separate parties, but a joint secretariat — how awful. It'll concentrate power in the hands of the leaders, and it'll be just like Cowley Street [election HQ] in perpetuity.' Cowley Street was indeed awful, throughout the election. One baffled SDPer commented: 'It had a poisonous atmosphere. I don't see why two camps of middle-class people, one SDP, one Liberal, feel such a need to disagree.'

If the carrot is tossed aside, then there's always the *stick*. 'If Owen loses the battle he will quit as SDP leader' (*Today*, Monday 15 June). The Liberals should accept Owen's offer. The SDP is now firmly the junior partner in the Alliance. And Owen has few saving graces. He's hell to work with. 'He seems to require either a shouting match, or constant ego massage,' said one weary SDP National Committee member. He also seems to have lost his political sense; his insistence that Thatcher was about to go to the country on 7 May (when the Alliance was high in the polls) ensured she did the exact opposite. And above all, he's dragging the SDP into an ideological confrontation with the Liberals, to whom his defence policies, and his talk of a 'social market economy' are anathema.

Owen has become too big for his tiny party, and too dangerous for a merged party. A senior Liberal gave him this epitaph: 'Owen is like a tiger that you keep at the bottom of the garden. You take people to see it, and they say, "Oh, isn't it magnificent". You say, "Yes, but it's a danger to friend and foe alike".'

No smoking rooms

The time for merger is coming, probably around the year-end. But it'll exact a price — months of internal turmoil until then.

On the Liberal side, meetings of the ALC, and the party's National Council will be particularly intense — with ex-MP Michael Meadowcroft leading the opposition. In the SDP, Owen will be continuing his rearguard action, hoping his support among the membership and the National Committee (led by ousted MP Mike Thomas) holds up. Should the opposition fail to sway the party members in advance of the autumn conferences (SDP: Portsmouth, Libs: Harrogate), there'll be motions recommending unity, proposed by the parties' National Committees. If passed, and the likelihood is that they will be, the battles proper can commence — over the leadership, and the soul of the new party.

The leadership should be the less contentious of the two issues. The Liberals will expect to lay a claim on the basis of their parliamentary majority, and sizeable membership. Assuming Steel does not stand (he may, at least as an interim candidate) then the candidates are Paddy Ashdown and Alan Beith, with Ashdown the favourite.

But, as ever, questions of the heart will prove more painful. Tim Clement Jones, Chairman of the Liberals: 'The beauty of it is that we'll have a bloody good debate — right out in the open. No more smoking room pacts.' Last week, senior Liberals and SDP members alike were talking wistfully of a 'realignment of the left' — an alliance with moderates in the Labour Party. Such an alliance may make electoral sense now, but it underestimates a newly confident Labour Party's hopes for 1991, and the fact that it brings no parliamentary advantage to Labour, given the Tories' huge majority. Anyway, ideologically Butskellism has served the two parties ill, with both sides agreed that it has blunted their 'cutting edge'.

If the new party is to regain that cutting edge, it must look to the high ground of British politics, concentrating on classic Liberal constitutional issues. Only by stressing issues such as open government, electoral reform, the rights of the individual, can the party hope to distinguish itself sufficiently from the other two parties. Such a course of action may well involve a lengthy apprenticeship. One SDP enthusiast thought it would take until '1995 . . . we've got to resign ourselves to eight years out of power . . . but the alternative is to confine ourselves to the fringes forever'. □

'And ever more came out of that same door wherein I went' . . .

This was the plaint of a man who could not escape the common round of conventional answers to his questions. Perhaps he was stuck in beliefs — maybe even sacred ones — but he was stuck. Is there no way out?

Perhaps; if you would like to see, write to:

The Blavatsky Trust (B)
P.O. Box 16, London W3 6HS

THE SDP

We need a union

ROGER LIDDLE, *a senior member of the SDP, argues for merger* and *David Owen*

THE ALLIANCE cannot continue as it is. Either Liberals and Social Democrats go forward towards closer union or we fall apart. That is the reality and in the next few months all members of the Alliance will have to come to terms with it.

The present formula of two parties with separate identities and separate leaders, bound together in an informal Alliance, has failed. It was sold to us as a potential electoral asset — offering a practical demonstration of politicians working together. But the electorate didn't see it like that. To them separation automatically meant division: if we had two leaders they must be facing both ways. The image of Tweedledum and Tweedledee was all too apposite.

What's more, the existence of two parties and two leaders undermined our claim to be a credible contender for government and locked us into limiting (and then overemphasising) our ambitions to hold the 'balance of power'. This in turn reinforced the perception that Owen might do one thing and Steel another. The votes the Alliance lost because 'you can't get your act together' swelled the numbers who drifted away because 'you can't win'. In many ways it is a tribute to the underlying resilience of the Alliance position that, despite everything, our vote held at 23 per cent.

This is a substantial electoral base. But we will only build on it if we can break away from the inward-looking obsessions of the present Alliance relationship. Ironically, we have to learn some of the lessons that Neil Kinnock drew from Labour's 1983 experience. We need clearer themes, more skilfully packaged, with better staff structures capable of implementing a more effective campaign. But in today's Alliance policy-making has become a sterile process of negotiation. Delegation of responsibility has proved difficult because of the lack of clear channels of authority. Instead of looking forward and outwards, everyone spends their time looking over their shoulder. A single party structure is a necessary condition for putting this right.

Equal partners

But the most powerful argument against the status quo is that, although they may be reluctant to admit it, many key Alliance activists face a crisis of morale. 'Breaking the mould' of British politics since 1981 has been tough going. For many it has meant a large sacrifice of time, career and family (far greater than that any Tory or Labour prospective candidate would normally feel obliged to undergo). If the Alliance fails to move forward many will gradually drop by the wayside. A fresh start is needed to lift all our spirits.

What then are the options for a closer union? My view is that the Alliance needs a short internal

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debate in which every option is thoroughly explored. The nub of the argument seems to me to be this. Many Social Democrats have always hesitated about 'merger' on the grounds that it sounded like a Liberal takeover. After all, to most of our members who never before had joined a political party, if they'd wanted to be Liberals they could have joined them years before. I sympathise with this view. That is why 'union' must be a coming together of two equal partners, not a swallowing up of one side by the other.

The objectives are plain. The Alliance needs a single leader, a single national organisation, and a single, one-member-one-vote, democratic, policy-making machinery. But within that unified structure it should be possible to provide some flexibility for people to retain some separate identity where they wish.

For example, in each constituency the members of each party could ballot on whether they wished to create a unified organisation or, for the time being at least, remain separate. Where they decided to unite, the new Alliance party would elect two representatives to the national policy-making body. Where they decided to stay separate, the local Liberal and SDP organisations would continue to send one representative each. As appropriate to a social democrat whose upbringing owed far more to Methodism than to Marx, I have in mind the model of the union of the Methodist churches in the 1930s. Then, a single national Conference and secretariat was created. But local congregations of Wesleyans and Primitives were not forced into shot-gun chapel mergers against their will.

However, our essential objectives — a single leader, a single policy and a single national organisation — will only be achieved through a union of this kind. A federation will not do. Federation implies the retention of the structure of the parties as they presently are, but with a new overarching federal tier to which specific and perhaps limited responsibilities would be delegated. The danger with such an arrangement is that although there would be a single leader, it would institutionalise conflict. The SDP would continue to decide its own policy; the Liberals would continue to decide theirs. The Federal Council would then have responsibility under the full glare of public gaze for somehow cobbling together a compromise. A federation might therefore highlight divisions; keep us looking inward not outward; and provide no clear structure of authority. Policy would in practice be determined by power-brokers in smoke-filled rooms, not by representatives of both Liberals and Social Democrats directly elected by the joint membership on a one-member-one-vote basis.

> ***"Union" must be a coming together of equal partners, not a swallowing up of one side by the other***

Owen's choice

These decisions are for the members, not anyone else. There are no conceivable grounds for denying members of the SDP the right to decide on these issues of principle in a secret postal ballot. To attempt to obstruct this democratic process would be an abrogation of everything the SDP has ever said about trade union as well as inner-party democracy.

The Alliance, however, needs quick decisions — a membership ballot on the issue of union in the early autumn; the setting up — if the members' decision is positive — of a joint commission to prepare a detailed scheme for approval by a joint constitutional convention early in the New Year; and the election of an Alliance leader by postal ballot by the time of the local elections next May. No more than a year must be wasted before we begin the serious business of putting together our campaign for the next general election.

Some people are hesitant about all this — not because they oppose union, but because they want to be certain David Owen will lead it. However, that condition is impossible to establish in advance. Getting the structure right has to come first. That was the position when we established the SDP.

My personal view is that we need David Owen and that he remains a figure of towering authority and substance who can provide a real challenge to Mrs Thatcher. Many of us in both parties think he would make the best leader. Were he to retreat into lonely isolation, defending a tiny laager of ideological purity, it would be a tragedy for him and for us. His stark choice is to join in creating a full and equal union — or to break the back of the SDP. □

Roger Liddle, was Alliance candidate in the Fulham by-election in April 1986.

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In defence of a wider politics

SARAH BENTON *on the dismal truth about the election*

FOR SOCIALISTS, the dismal truth is that the majority of electors are anti-socialist. To argue that the presentation was too frothy or emotional, that a 'true' socialism would have won votes while Labour's kitsch version can't, is a self-delusion. Through the glitz of the campaign, and Kinnock's soul ballad to one nation, enough of an authentic socialist party came through for voters to know they didn't want it.

What they don't want at this moment is a party of and for the working-class, or a coalition of the oppressed. Both mean a struggle against the dominant powers and values of Britain. They mean identifying with those conspicuously in the opposition — trade unionists, unemployed, inner-city dwellers, blacks, even, speak it softly, gays and lesbians. The 13.7 million Conservative voters want to be on the winning side; it requires nothing of them but that they put their money where Mrs Thatcher's mouth is. To vote Conservative is to vote against political activism, against disturbing groups like blacks and gays, to prefer the values of the 'private' sphere, in all its meanings, over the public. For all the vaunted radicalism of Mrs Thatcher's government, it has engendered a deadly *political* passivity. As the 650 election results rolled in, most of them said the same thng: 'No change'.

This is a block which socialists have come up against time after time; conservatism presided over the mass unemployment of the 1930s and the mass employment of the 1950s. The state of employment on its own does not explain a dearth of political ambition. The massive votes for Labour in Wales and Scotland are more significant. It is not that the employment patterns here are fundamentally different from those in, say, the English Midlands. More that class and political tradition of opposition to an English ruling-class reinforce each other and nurture a desire for a political voice, a confidence in political identity. Those qualities are thin and fractious in English towns and cities, with the added confusion for white and black alike over how race connects to a national political identity. Almost half of London's inner-city voters demonstrated their connection to politics by just not voting.

Can the Labour Party create a political voice which is more persuasive than Thatcher's? Can it create the *desire* for a political voice among the hopeless? There are two schools of thought, both influential in Labour circles, which doubt if political parties have this power. We have first the political scientists who argue that Labour's chances of electoral success are in direct relation to the size of the electorate in certain key socio-economic categories: occupation, income, home ownership etc. This is the base line for the arguments about class and party 'dealignment' in which political choice is seen to be a direct and unmediated product of economic attainment. If there is a political strategy to come out of this, it can only be that a direct link of class to party through policy be further dissolved in order that the vital middle-class, whose self-propagation shows no sign of abating, be not further alienated from Labour.

This school of thought seems to me to be a misreading of how economic status translates into both class identity and into politics. At the least, it doesn't explain why (for instance) in the three constituencies of Newham (East London) where hardly an outpost of the middle-class has been established, almost one fifth of the electorate voted Tory, one tenth Alliance, and two fifths don't vote at all, leaving Labour with a wretched three tenths of the possible vote. No, if Labour discards politics in favour of mere economic representation, it makes its future, the future of socialism itself, constantly hostage to the small gains and losses in economic attainment of sets of the population.

> ***'For all the vaunted radicalism of Mrs Thatcher's government, it has engendered a deadly political passivity'***

Still, the party here has a great weight of tradition to fight through, one that is peculiarly strong in England where socio-economics has always, with its safe, computable facts ever pressing to turn horses into herbivorous quadrupeds, been preferred to political thought and one which has been richly replenished in the last decade by the men in white coats with their databanks of useful breakdowns on the constituents of Britain. (Not, of course, that one should dispute the value of relevant empirical information, but one does need to know what is and what isn't relevant, and why. As we know, the psephologists have only interpreted the world; the point is to change it.)

Problems of modernity

There is a second, much more apocalyptic vision of a future without class and party. It is spoken for eloquently by writers and journalists schooled in sociology and social commentary and perceives social breakdown as the almost inevitable consequence of a two-pronged process: a class that both shrinks in size so its automatic political expression becomes impotent; and at the same time shrinks in material wealth, so that it can only drift into a life of crime, debt and brutalism. The only barrier against this awful future is a strong welfare state which the rich had better be persuaded to support unless they want to see the stability on which they depend destroyed by the desperate and amoral beggars coming through the gate.

What this camp does address, which the more political ones ignore, is of course a profound and real issue; it is less one measured in terms of income and home ownership or geography than in the widespread disquiet at the loss of meaningful social ties, and thus the loss of meaning to living in society at all. We create a land fit for hermits. It speaks to what elsewhere has been discussed as problems of modernity: the essential loneliness of the modern world; of schizophrenia and depression as the significant madnesses of our age, the one with its unbreachable rupture between private and public meanings, the other with its sense that if the public world does have any meaning it is only to confirm the utter pointlessness and worthlessness of the individual's life. It is a world which sports as an archetype of modernity the woman on her own who lives in fear of rape or even murder, not because these are statistically likely but because such brutal and apparently meaningless acts of invasion of her very person seem as probable as any other eventuality.

Many of these prophets of modern society point to a real and symbolic experience of urban life. But by seeing politics simply as the expression of pre-existing economic classes, rather than as the only force which can create public connections and purpose, they inevitably tend to Big Brother solutions. Both the police force and the paternal welfare state must be strengthened. It is part of the impoverishment of political discourse that it cannot and does not illuminate this experience of modern life in any other terms. And it is part of the limitation of riot, as an ebullient collective protest against both the experience and the state solution, that it cannot go beyond the deed to the word. Unlike say the political Paris protests of 1968, the uprisings of the 1980s have been strikingly without political voice.

Socialism's impasse

There is a sharp political voice, muted in the election campaign, coming in from the left. At its best it has sustained a discussion about why the social democracy, for which we now feel such wry nostalgia, failed to deliver the political goods. The best discussion has originated in this camp because it is the left which has kept a foothold in political theory and was never convinced that redecorating Labour's organisation would solve socialism's political crisis. You would have to be St Francis of Assisi, however, to find consensus among the rival analysts, though perhaps they would agree that the nub of the issue is the question of political leadership. The debate has not had an enriching

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mix of arguments from those movements which have done so much to highlight, even accelerate socialism's crisis as a simple class movement. And though the commissioners of discussion, in conference, book and journal, bear some responsibility for that it is not theirs alone. The very point of a particular movement, for women or blacks, for gays or the disabled, is that it *is* particular and does not claim to speak for all. That is the political problem which no 'broad church' can dissolve.

For at its sectarian worst the left, especially inside the Labour Party, merely offers a knot of tactical alliances devoid of political argument or strategy, whose limited aim is to win position within the party. Insofar as it has an historical explanation of socialism's impasse it is that the leadership has betrayed the led; without perceiving the political relationship between leaders and led but only the betrayal by one side, this remains at the level of consolatory reproach, not political strategy.

Apart from anything else, such a moral and one-sided view of leaders and led has made it virtually impossible for such groups to produce their own political leadership, for they must be ever looking over their shoulder for accusations of careerism and betrayal. The movement of various left groups into the Labour Party has in some key ways stultified political thought; the groups, coming from an extra-parliamentary tradition, have abandoned their activities outside the party, forsaken any 'market' test of whether or not their ideas have any valuable politicising effect in grassroots movements and exchanged their freedom of political thought for the exigencies of positional gain.

It is a sour reward for the sort of strategy put forward by Tony Benn and Eric Heffer a few years ago when they urged all left groups to come out of the rain into the Labour Party. They spoke in metaphors of churches and umbrellas, an imagery of peaceful co-existence and detente, as Eurocommunism spoke of adding new enriching ingredients to the basic working-class recipe, the instant cake mix road to socialism. Both are static notions of the relations between different political interests.

But the Labour Party's was the more deadening in demanding that other political interests forego their life outside the party. Out of it came no strategy for how the *party* could change politics. It produced at best ideas on how the party *through the state* could better respond to oppressed groups. Party and state become indistinguishable and the civil associations outside the state, on which democratic politics depend, wither from malnutrition, give up at the impossibility of supporting the Labour Party and banging on at it to get the housing repairs done, the community grant paid on time.

If it is more than a matter of waiting for the economic conditions to come right, returning to the left a workforce that is not intimidated by unemployment and public sector cuts, then political organisations have to take the initiative. They cannot deliver the economic goods. They can kindle and direct a desire for the essential quality of politics; the wish to control and change the conditions of your life. Or rather, wanting to do it collectively, in a way that changes public values and the social exercise of power. Neither the Labour Party nor any of the groups and movements which, by and large, support it needs to be in government to do that. □

PERMANENT GOVERNMENT

Queen Boadicea at the Cabinet door

Peter Hennessy

TO BE CALLED 'another Churchill', as the Tory faithful sometimes like to describe Mrs Thatcher, must make the Prime Minister purr with pleasure. It would be intriguing to know if the comparison with Lloyd George, that other great 20th-century war leader, has a similar effect on her emotions. I doubt it, but it is apt nonetheless.

'All Prime Ministers like to get their way. Some are more subtle than others at achieving it. Mrs Thatcher has proved incapable of imitating Attlee by using silence as a weapon. For all her experience she cannot overawe her ministers with a great set piece like Churchill. It's almost as if she abhors collectivism in all its forms'

For not since the backbench revolt which brought down LG in 1922 has there been such a sustained attack on a personal style of Cabinet government as that mounted against Mrs Thatcher in the election campaign. David Steel began it two days before the election was called, accusing the Prime Minister of 'having virtually abolished Cabinet government and replaced it with personal autocracy'. Later, after her letter to David Owen about Alliance defence policy, Mr Steel said: 'You would think she is trying to treat us as though we were members of her Cabinet.'

Labour took up the refrain. For Neil Kinnock the Prime Minister was, as he put in his oft-quoted interview with IRN's Peter Murphy, a practitioner of 'one person government', though, as he later explained, it was not entirely her fault as 'the sycophants and assorted doormats' around the Cabinet table allowed her to get away with it. For Denis Healey it was 'a matter of legitimate public concern that she is concentrating power in No 10 Downing Street and in a most dictatorial way'. For Bryan Gould she was 'surrounded by a Cabinet of tired, grey men, concerned only with survival, the stuffing knocked out of them by the constant need to say "yes" when the Boss said "yes"'. The litany went on without end.

The cumulative attacks from the opposition parties were significant, as it's rare for constitutional proprieties to become an election issue: but they were not surprising. The element of surprise belonged to John Biffen who told the *Mail on Sunday* that, if purged from the Cabinet, 'I would sooner leave on my feet than crawl on my knees. I cannot guarantee to show the same contrition as my predecessors.' Contrite those predecessors may have been at the moment of departure, but some of them have made up for it since. Sir Ian Gilmour has spoken of 'a downgrading of Cabinet government', Norman St John Stevas of her tendency 'to reduce the Cabinet to subservience'. Jim Prior suggested she was wreaking revenge for Ted Heath placing her in his Cabinet 'on his right side, carefully hidden by the Secretary of the Cabinet who was always leaning forward to take notes'.

I HAVE always thought the obituaries for Cabinet government were premature. One of the tests for me was what policies would have emerged — on health, broadcasting and, in the first term, Northern Ireland and Rhodesia/Zimbabwe, for example — if she had been able to ride her chariot, Boadicea-style, unhindered through the Cabinet room. Her style was domineering, certainly, but if rebutted forcefully she could amend her views. Lord Hailsham likened it to arguing a case before the late Lord Chief Justice, Rayner Goddard, when 'if you laid down on your back with your paws in the air and wagged your tail, you'd lose.'

Cabinet style and substance are not always easy to disentangle. All Prime Ministers like to get their way. Some are more subtle than others at achieving it. Mrs Thatcher has proved incapable of imitating Attlee by using silence as a weapon. For all her experience she cannot overawe her ministers with a great set piece like Churchill. She cannot make them laugh like Macmillan with his historical allusions, nor manipulate them like Wilson, nor hang back and score at the last moment like Callaghan. It's almost as if she abhors collectivism in all its forms, including discussion as a prelude to decision, the essence of Cabinet government.

I write before the fate of the old Cabinet is known. How many go, and whether on their feet or on their knees, will be the first paragraph in a new and important chapter in the history of British Cabinet government. If the Prime Minister's shining new majority is cashed in for a Cabinet room chariot, more than the niceties of Cabinet conventions could be cut down and history, surely a major though unadmitted preoccupation for a third-term premier, may treat her unkindly. If her impulses were truly Tory, Churchill — that incurable romantic about Cabinet government who took, as the now available minutes show, a large dose of criticism from his colleagues during his 'Indian summer' premiership, particularly over his attempts at personal diplomacy with the Russians — would be her role model, not Lloyd George. □

Peter Hennessy is a visiting Fellow at the Policy Studies Institute and author of Cabinet, *Blackwell, £7.50.*

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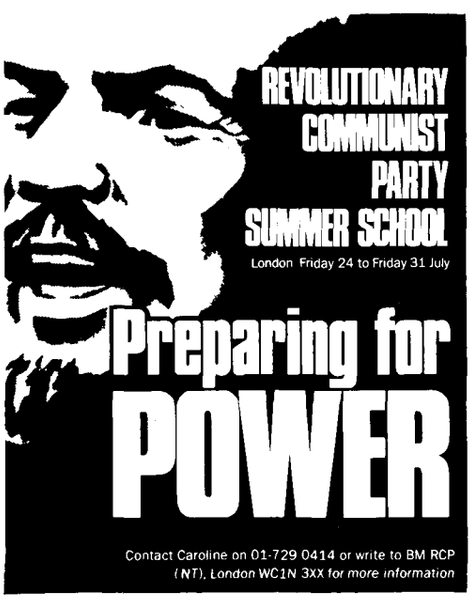
The *capo* casts them loose

CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS *reports on the right and wrong of serving the President*

Washington

MY OLD FRIEND Patrick Cockburn once shrewdly observed to me that there is something in common between a certain kind of blonde and a certain kind of soldier. I waited, intrigued, for his pay-off line. 'Both kinds,' he said, 'are very anxious not to be thought stupid.' This insight came back to me as I watched the tempestuous Ms Fawn Hall holding a pack of balding and paunchy legislators at bay. Did she know right from wrong? She supposed so. Did she ever wonder what all those thick envelopes were doing kicking around her office? Yes, she had allowed herself to wonder. Did she not think it odd that Colonel Oliver North had stuffed the shredder until it jammed, immediately following a Presidential press conference? Sort of funny, yes. It took hours of this kind of incredulous questioning before Ms Hall came right out with it. There were certain 'paper laws', she said, that it was OK to break in a good cause. Rather than be thought stupid or gullible, she appealed to the higher nobility of anti-communism and free-enterprise government.

The soldierly North is crazy and unstable, but he isn't stupid either. This much became plain during the testimony of Felix Rodriguez. Senor Rodriguez is one of the true believers. A former friend of Batista's, he has been up to his thorax in every piece of counter-revolutionary skulduggery since the Bay of Pigs. Under the *nom de guerre* of Max Gomez, he assisted in the capture and murder of Che Guevara, and still flaunts Guevara's watch as a souvenir. Between him and the Sandinistas, in other words,. it's personal. Rodriguez was testifying about his derring-do with the Contra network, and mentioned a shady evening he had spent in the company of Oliver North. North had boasted that Congress and the State Department would have kittens if they knew what he was up to, 'but no one can touch me, because the old man loves my ass'. There was no doubt that the 'old man' was the Chief Executive and leader of the free world.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> ***Corruption and private enrichment are intelligible in a way that an organised assault on democracy is not***

North and his subordinates thought that they had an unlimited grant of immunity from the old man. That wasn't necessarily stupid, but it probably led to a dangerous hubris. North could pick up the telephone and order a whole superpower into action. His warrant was enough to wave aside diplomats and senior generals. His slush fund could authorise expenditures on anything. The law officers of the state melted away at his whim, their misgivings stilled by the magic seal of the White House.

What North forgot was what every employee of a *capo* forgets. The *capo* can give you the power of life and death over others, and can shower you with money that he prints himself. He can find you women. He can make your enemies go away. He can make you feel tremendously good about yourself. But the *capo* loses interest in you when you get caught.

The Congressional hearings have reminded me of nothing so much as one of those protracted New York trials, where the district attorney strives for years to prove what everybody knows to be true. Nobody doubts the involvement in organised crime of the Gambino or Salerno family. But who will come on the stand and bear direct witness? Usually, a disillusioned subordinate fills this role — some poor sap who found out too late that he was expendable. The district attorney's task is to keep this man alive until he can testify, to make sure that he doesn't change his story in the middle and to make sure that not too much evidence has been destroyed in the meantime.

It has become obvious during the hearings that Oliver North, Richard Secord and a few others were told to make certain things happen, make certain people disappear, make certain laws null and void. They were given the resources to accomplish the task. The *capo*, they were told, doesn't much care how you get the job done. But if you get caught, he won't know you any more. One telephone call is the best you can expect.

In every mafia scandal there is a law-enforcement figure: either a police officer or a judge, who is compromised. These people always have the most sensitive job, because they must appear to be zealous guardians of the peace while serving a lawless master. The day of maximum sweat comes when there is a bust, and you need both sides of your mouth to speak out of. It takes talent. Edwin Meese III, Attorney General of the United States, lacks this talent.

On 25 November last year, he was licking his fat lips in front of the cameras, talking nervously about possibly unlawful behaviour in the White House itself. But only a few days before, he had privately told the FBI to lay off their investigation into the destruction of evidence. The days of grace that he bought were the days in which Oliver North fed the shredder and Fawn Hall stuffed her boots and her blouse with the papers that would not fit. That was just enough time to allow Meese to blame as 'cowboys' the people who had basked in the President's favour until a few minutes before. For that betrayal, the loyal subordinates will never forgive him.

Hatred of Meese, and contempt for his clumsy attempt to disown him, was the only emotion betrayed by General Richard Secord in the early days of the hearings. How dare the man suggest that patriots like Secord were acting without orders from on high. Senor Rodriguez and Ms Hall have made the same point in different ways.

Ronald Reagan once told a press conference that land-based missiles were safer than the submarine-launched variety because 'they can be recalled'. Oh no they can't, and nor can the unguided missiles of covert action and secret government. Many is the *capo* who thought he had allowed for every contingency, and then found that he was put in the dock by a garrulous underling.

All the President's wishes

The original plan was to blame everything on North and to look pained and bewildered at the way in which he had exceeded his authority. This plan is simply not working, and for two good reasons. The first is the staunch and consistent testimony by all the other underlings. All of them swear that they had good reason to think they were carrying out the President's express wishes. The second is the simple extent, as revealed to Congress, of North's influence. He had, as the *Washington Post* put it, combined the jobs of Secretary of Defense with Secretary of State, and still had time left over to be secretary of the Treasury. This was not North exceeding his authority, or usurping it from anyone else. It was North making full use of the plenary powers given him by Reagan.

Congress is still reluctant to face the full truth, but it will have to do so because the challenge to legislative democracy is so great and so brazen. For the moment, it is concentrating on the minor aspect of the misappropriation of funds. The repulsive Albert Hakim, Iranian arms broker, has testified that he set up a $200,000 trust fund for North's family and also left him $2 million in his will. By the standards of the scandal, this is peccadillo behaviour and small-change money. But at last it focuses on something the public — now deluged with information — can understand. Corruption and private enrichment are intelligible in a way that an organised assault on democracy and the Constitution is not. So who's counting? They got Al Capone for tax evasion. □

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The gathering storm

MICHAEL STEWART *warns of a breakdown in the social order of the Western democracies*

IN APRIL 1986, in New Orleans, I bought a wall chart which showed the movement of the Dow Jones Industrial Average since its inception in 1896. The local entrepreneur who was marketing this useful indicator of the progress of 20th-century capitalism had thoughtfully left space — horizontally — to extend the movement of the Index until the end of 1988. His vertical scale, however, ended at 1850 — a comfortable distance, he must have thought, above the level of the Dow Jones at the time. Exactly a year later, the Dow Jones was above 2400; and since then new records have been set in the stock markets of London, Tokyo, Hong Kong and a number of other places.

At a superficial level, the reasons for this euphoria are easy to discern. Throughout the developed world, living standards — for those in work — are at their highest ever. Economic growth is proceeding steadily, if slowly. Profits have been doing very nicely, thank you. Inflation has been brought under control. The power of organised labour has been much diminished. Right-wing governments which have created, or at any rate presided over, these happy developments are regularly re-elected. Sunshine and roses, all the way.

Beneath this tranquil surface, however, there are strains and tensions which threaten to erupt in unpleasant ways. One set of problems is rooted in the global imbalances that have emerged during the last decade. The United States has been running a balance of payments deficit so huge that within a few years the country has been transformed from the world's biggest creditor to the world's biggest debtor. The counterpart of these deficits are the surpluses notched up year after year by Japan and Germany. Neither deficits nor surpluses on this scale make any kind of sense, nor are they indefinitely sustainable; but in the continued absence of orderly and rational policies to reduce or eliminate them, they are likely to be reduced or eliminated in a disorderly and destructive way.

Another global imbalance stems from the international debt problem. The combination of the large build-up of developing country debt in the 1970s and early 1980s, the high level of real interest rates attending monetarist strategies for defeating inflation, the very depressed level of commodity prices, and the extreme reluctance of Western banks to make any new money available to developing countries has resulted in a grotesque situation: despite substantial rescheduling, there is actually a net transfer of resources taking place from the poor countries to the rich ones. The pressure this imposes on living standards, particularly in Latin America, is likely to prove explosive.

These strains in the international arena are matched by strains within individual developed countries, particularly those most affected by the political shift to the right at the beginning of this decade. In the United States, Reagan's ideological commitment to cutting non-military public expenditure foundered on the rock of middle-class resistance to cuts in social security and Medicare. All the fiercer, in consequence, were the cuts in means-tested benefits going to the poorest fifth of the population, and federal funding of housing, health and educational programmes. In Britain, the effects on the living standards of the bottom fifth of the population of the trebling of unemployment since 1979, and of the squeeze on the resources made available to the state health and educational systems, are too familiar and well-documented to need recounting. The story is not very different in outline, though it varies in scale and intensity, in a number of other European countries.

> ***'Strains in the international arena are matched by strains within individual developed countries, particularly those most affected by the political shift to the right at the beginning of this decade'***

Economic breakdown

On the basis of this situation and set of trends, national and international, it is possible to describe in detail how the conditions of life in Western Europe, the United States — and indeed Japan — might deteriorate over the next decade or so until they reached a state which could only be contemplated with horror. Peter Jay and I have endeavoured to provide a plausible account of how this might happen.*

Economic and political breakdown in the United States might not seem a very plausible scenario. But the American economy has been malfunctioning for a couple of decades. While still ahead of the field in such areas as civil aircraft, computers, and some aspects of electronics — all of which have benefited from federal expenditure on military and space programmes — it has performed much less well elsewhere. But it is in Western Europe — and nowhere more than in Britain — that economic problems are likely to become most acute, and the capacity of democracy to cope with them to come most into question. Western Europe seems incapable of reducing unemployment much below 10 per cent; and in the development and use of a variety of new technologies it is slipping behind Japan and the high-tech enclaves of the US. ▷

**Apocalypse 2000: economic breakdown of the suicide and democracy 1989-2000*, published by Sidgwick & Jackson on 18 June, £12.95.

'I come down to have a word with the ordinary Joe on the shopfloor — and no shopfloor!'

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Even in the stronger economies such as Germany, and certainly in the weaker ones such as Britain, it is possible to foresee a destructive cycle emerging over the next decade or so. Slow growth, and a declining ability to compete internationally, will lead to further increases in unemployment. This, together with a deepening of the divide between rich and poor, will lead to a political shift, with right-wing governments being ousted by left-wing ones. These governments will succeed in effecting some reduction in unemployment, but only at the cost of re-igniting inflation.

As inflation threatens to accelerate out of control, and long before unemployment has come down even to the levels of the late 1970s, there will be a right-wing backlash. Highly conservative governments will take power, and adopt drastically deflationary policies to bring inflation down; and unemployment will rise to much higher levels even than those of the mid-1980s. There might, or might not, be another turn of the cycle before people decided that anything — even a left-wing or right-wing strong man — was better than this.

Avoiding apocalypse

How might such an apocalyse be avoided? Part of the answer, like part of the problem, must lie in the international sphere. It would help, for a start, if the annual economic summits of the kind held last week in Venice could stop being vast public relations jamborees aimed almost exclusively at the participants' home electorates, and revert to their original function. This was to permit the leaders of the main industrial countries to discuss informally the key obstacles to economic progress in an increasingly interdependent world, and agree if necessary to take action which on narrow political grounds they might prefer to avoid, in order to contribute to a better outlook for the world economy as a whole. Small chance of that, perhaps, as long as people like Mrs Thatcher and Mr Kohl are in charge; all the more reason, then, for hoping that they will retire gracefully from the scene sooner rather than later.

But it is at the national level that appropriate policies will, or will not, be adopted. For Japan, it is not just a question of the short-term need — great though that is — to adopt more expansionary policies. It is the need to accept a degree of responsibility in managing the world economy commensurate with its economic superpower status. A Japanese economic Marshall Plan, aimed at the poorer countries of Southeast Asia, would not be a bad start.

For the Unites States the best hope may lie in the election next year of an enlightened Democratic President who can overcome the handicaps imposed on an activist Presidency by the Constitution's separation of powers, and work with a Democratic Congress to get the country back on the rails. Taxes will have to be raised in order to eliminate the structural budget deficit, particularly since it is difficult to see how the increasing ghettoisation of American society can be turned round, or the glaring deficiencies of the public education, health and housing systems remedied, without substantial increases in federal government expenditure.

> ***'There is no reason to suppose that economic growth would be slower . . . under a government committed to a policy of reducing unemployment and inequality. Even if we were, such a policy would still be right, not only on moral grounds, but as the surest way of avoiding a slide into a dangerous, perhaps disastrous, future'***

But more will be needed than that. Somehow, the American preoccupation with making and spending a fast buck — never more in evidence than during the last few years — will have to be moderated in the interests of higher saving, higher investment and more expenditure on non-military research and development.

What about Britain?

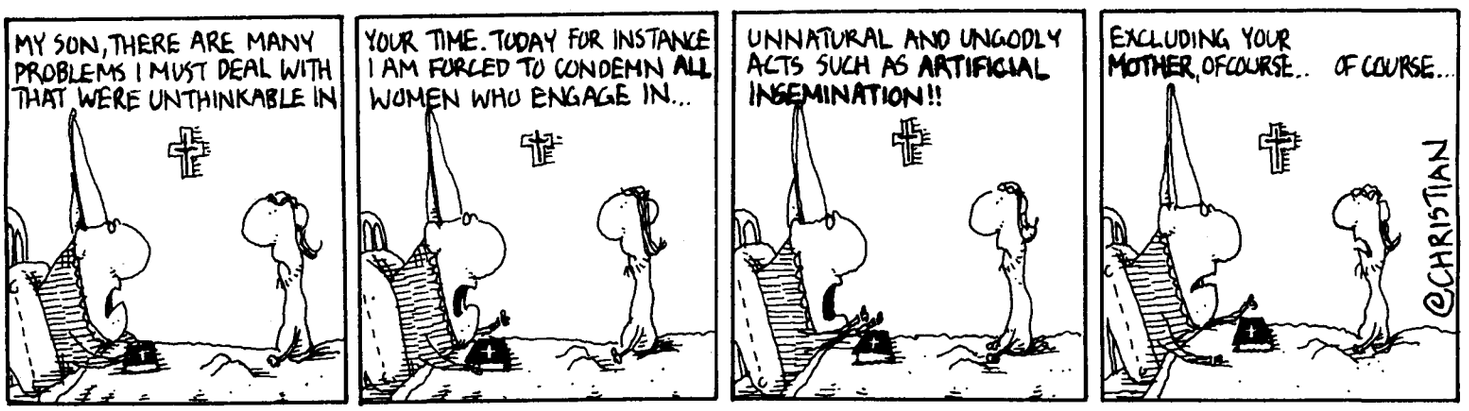
And what of Western Europe, and particularly of Britain? For if Britain can overcome its looming problems, the rest of Europe ought to be able to as well. There are two top priorities in Britain, whatever Mrs Thatcher may think. One is to reduce unemployment to something like half its present level, and to do so without re-igniting inflation. The other is to distribute the fruits of economic growth much more fairly than has been the case during the last eight years.

Reducing unemployment is partly a matter of increasing the right kinds of government expenditure, partly a question of improving our abysmal performance in training and re-training the labour force, and partly a matter of securing a competitive exchange rate. A judicious selection from the Labour and Alliance manifestos (supported, between them, by more than half the electorate) would indicate most of the detailed action required to reduce unemployment.

Avoiding a rising inflation rate is a different matter. Labour has no realistic policy for this, and the Alliance's inflation tax, though it might work, and should certainly be tried, is an unknown quantity. What is needed in the longer run, and should be embarked on immediately, is a system of wage payment which links individual rewards much more closely to the profitability of the firm. If wage-inflation in the private sector could be minimised in this kind of way — as it is in Japan — the problem of public sector pay settlements would be relatively easy to deal with.

As regards fairness, most of what needs to be done is perfectly obvious; what is lacking is the political will to do it. A good deal more money needs to be spent by government on social security benefits, and a lot more on health and education. Some of this would be financed by the extra revenue accruing from employing 95 per cent of the labour force instead of less than 90 per cent. Some of it would, of course, come from higher rates of direct taxation. The idea that Britain's growth rate would be adversely affected if the basic rate of income tax was higher than 27 per cent, or the top rate — even on unearned income — higher than 60 per cent, is among the more pernicious myths that the New Right has managed to sell to a credulous public. Britain's growth prospects would be better than they are if only a fraction of the money given away in tax cuts since 1979 had been spent on higher education, and research and development.

There is no reason whatever to suppose that economic growth would be slower than otherwise under a government committed to a policy of reducing unemployment and inequality. But even if there were, such a policy would still be right, not only on moral grounds, but as the surest way of avoiding a slide into a dangerous, perhaps disastrous, future. The re-election of Mrs Thatcher does nothing to make apocalypse less likely. □


MY SON, THERE ARE MANY PROBLEMS I MUST DEAL WITH THAT WERE UNTHINKABLE IN
YOUR TIME. TODAY FOR INSTANCE I AM FORCED TO CONDEMN ALL WOMEN WHO ENGAGE IN...
UNNATURAL AND UNGODLY ACTS SUCH AS ARTIFICIAL INSEMINATION!!
EXCLUDING YOUR MOTHER, OFCOURSE.. OF COURSE...
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MEDIA

News on Sunday: what went wrong?

John Hoyland

NEWS ON SUNDAY was launched with £6.5 million of largely labour movement money and the support of thousands of people who looked forward to a genuine paper of the left that would counter the right-wing bias of Fleet Street. The paper was to be pitched between the down-market and mid-market tabloids, and was to combine hard news and investigative journalism with a lively and imaginative approach to features and entertainment. Market research on a dummy issue produced in 1985 indicated a circulation of over 800,000 for such a paper.

These hopes were dashed by a disastrous launch, and the paper's future is currently in doubt. *What went wrong*?

It is my strong belief that the original concept for *News on Sunday* was sound, and that a market of at least half a million does exist for such a paper. But a series of appalling errors meant that this belief was never really put to the test.

The first error was to base the paper in Manchester rather than London. Taken for what appeared to be laudable moral/political reasons, this decision severely reduced the number of quality journalists who were prepared to work for the paper and produced acute logistical problems between the Manchester and London offices.

The second and far more serious error was the appointment of an editor, Keith Sutton, who was neither willing nor able to produce the kind of paper that *News on Sunday* was intended to be.

Sutton was chosen as the best applicant for the job, with the support of Editor-in-Chief John Pilger, who felt that their respective talents would complement each other well. But as soon as he was appointed, Sutton started to build his own power-base within the paper and reduce John Pilger's role and influence. In particular, he made appointments to key editorial positions (against Pilger's opposition) and froze out anyone who had been connected with the 1985 dummy, treating them with ill-concealed contempt for their supposed amateurism, and barely discussing with them their ideas for the paper or making use of the contacts they had built up with the left and the labour movement. He also opposed most of Pilger's proposals for key journalists and rejected the idea of calling in design consultants, on the grounds that 'newspapers are designed by subs' — a position he retained right up to his sacking last week.

By last December Sutton had engineered a position where the paper seemed obliged to choose between the two men. But by this time Sutton's personal charm and left rhetoric (a rhetoric, as it turned out, without any substance) had won over allies among the Executive Committee and the Founders Trust. Several of these distrusted Pilger anyway, believing that he wanted the power of editorship without the responsibility of doing actual work. They also believed that Sutton had a 'common touch' that Pilger lacked, and that he was a good, hard-working production editor.

Meanwhile, lacking information about what was really going on, the staff of the paper saw the conflict simply as a clash between two over-sized male egos, and felt Pilger was to blame as much as Sutton.

Thus it was that the third catastrophic mistake was made. On 12 December Sutton produced a dummy issue of almost unbelievable inadequacy. At the same time John Pilger produced some mock-up pages that were superior by any count, and that were solidly in line with the paper's original conception. Yet the Founders, the Executive Committee and the Board (backed by most of the staff, including, I regret to say, myself) decided to accept Sutton's excuses about production difficulties, and backed the editor we had rather than face the problem of finding a new one so near the launch.

THE PROJECT never recovered from the damage that was done by Pilger's subsequent resignation. The PR damage was immediate, and persisted right up to the launch. The damage to our credibility among potential contributors to the paper was equally serious. *News on Sunday* should have been a magnet to talent in the same way that the GLC was under Ken Livingstone. Instead, it repelled talent — the more so because Sutton appeared to believe that good writing and specialist journalism were irrelevant to tabloids. (Here again all that really mattered was the subs.)

> ***'The group of people who set up* News on Sunday *failed to control their own project sufficiently to avert the debacle. They fought among themselves while the so-called professionals hijacked the project away from its original aims'***

Finally, Pilger's resignation left deep divisions within the paper that never healed, with the role of the project's main initiators (notably Alan Hayling, chief executive and principal fundraiser, who had supported Pilger) being further diminished as Sutton's hold on the project consolidated.

He was essentially saved by the fourth major error of the project. This was to allow chief consultant Gerry Taylor a free hand with negotiating the above-the-line advertising campaign with the agency, BBH, instead of leaving this role with the Marketing Department as part of an integrated marketing strategy.

The campaign BBH came up with — despite the opposition of people like Alan Hayling and Marketing Director Chris Walsh — said nothing about the politically radical nature of the paper, but instead focused on just one aspect of it, which was the absence of Page 3 girls. In particular, the slogan 'No Tits but a lot of Balls' and its modified version 'The Naked Truth not Naked Women' produced an uproar of opposition within the company. The result — a campaign that was blunted at the last minute, and the resignations of both Gerry Taylor and BBH — provided further bad PR for the paper, and also meant that the above-the-line campaign was singularly ineffective. A Marplan survey after the launch showed that only 12 per cent of the population had been aware of the paper's existence, as opposed to 60 per cent with the *Independent*. While this is in part due to simple lack of funds for adequate media-buying, it is also due to the inadequacy of the campaign itself and the lack of an integrated above- and below-the-line marketing strategy.

The furore over the advertising distracted attention from the shortcomings of the product itself, and gave Keith Sutton a precious two weeks of freedom to continue along his own disastrous path. At the last Board of Directors meeting a fortnight before the launch, there was no dissent when it was suggested that the Board had no confidence in the editor of *News on Sunday*. But by then, of course, it was too late.

THE REST is history. Because of inadequate advertising and PR, and because of distribution problems in London aggravated by a deal with the National Retail Federation which succeeded in alienating large sections of the retail trade throughout the country, the first issue sold only 550,000 copies instead of the million plus it needed. And the paper was so lacklustre — the *Daily Mirror*'s election coverage was not only far more hard-hitting, it was also more left-wing! — four weeks later the circulation had dropped to less than half that.

Keith Sutton never accepted the brief he was given when he was appointed. Shunning all innovation, he reckoned that because papers like the *News of the World* sell millions of copies, the way to reach a large market was to be as much like them as possible. (In his revealing article in last week's *UK Press Gazette*, he even seemed to lament the lack of 'tit and bum to grease the gentle reader's palm'.) So the project of a new kind of paper — a radical and innovative paper that would carve out a new niche in the market by respecting its readership and providing them with quality journalism and ideas — was never tried out.

And the fact has to be faced that the group of people who set up *News on Sunday* failed to control their own project sufficiently to avert this debacle. Jealous of their own power and departmental autonomy, unable to work together constructively despite their proclaimed belief in 'collective leadership', they fought among themselves while allowing so-called 'professionals' to hijack the project away from its original aims.

The whole episode seems almost unforgiveable. Yet, even now, the circulation of *News on Sunday* is around the quarter-million mark — and given a better product, with funds for a re-launch, there is no question that the paper could be viable. With Thatcher riding high and her tame press more viciously partisan than ever, the attempt to start a paper of the left cannot be written off as an impossible dream. The intention was right. Let's hope we can learn from the mistakes. □

John Hoyland has been deputy director of marketing at News on Sunday. *Next week Sarah Benton reports in full on the paper's crisis.*

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ARTS

From the V&A's *Towards a Bigger Picture:* Francis Brugulère's 'Faces' (1929) and, right, Helen Chadwick's 'One Flesh'

PHOTOGRAPHY

A thousand eyes

Liz Heron

TOWARDS A BIGGER PICTURE: Contemporary British Photographs opened in January, a quiet curtain-raiser on the enlarged Photo Gallery space in the Henry Cole Wing at the V&A, three floors above the crowd-pulling Irving Penn and, now, style shots from *Blitz* magazine. Up there the air, for sure, is rarer. If keeper Mark Howarth-Booth's selection is open to question — maybe too narrowly suggesting the present range and vitality of independent photography — the imagination and critical flair he's brought to its presentation is admirable. It asks for a harder participation in the act of looking, and painstakingly gives some help.

This selection, which includes holograms and new, minimalist approaches to landscape, is set in the context of photographs taken from the museum's permanent collection. Laid out chronologically from the Victorian period up to a Lee Friedlander group from the 1960s and '70s, and with side commentaries on obliquely pre-figured preoccupations, they draw out influences on contemporary work and its formal and aesthetic concerns. As an illustration of how a permanent collection can illuminate historical understandings and brace the pleasures of viewing new work, it bodes well for what we'll see in the future.

Signs of the present times don't so much erupt as ironically permeate the surface of things. In documentary, the photographed event isn't ambushed at some instant of abrupt revelation, composed in such a way that its lurking evidence is fixed: the grotesque emblems of consumption in Martin Parr's Dublin supermarket; Paul Graham's Highgate DHSS office, a site of rumpled inertia. Both use colour and are aptly self-styled as 'social landscapists'; it's space itself that traps its human figures in inaction. A different kind of documentary, in the notably British tradition of romantic realism, is exemplified in Chris Killip's 'Seacoal' series on the hard struggle to harvest coal from the Northumbrian sea; an anachronism inflamed by the expansive poetry of light and sky.

There's no evidence here of that fast, exclamatory street-photography of a decade ago. One of its most energetic exponents, Paul Trevor, shows a section from his current work 'Constant Exposure' (now at the Photographers' Gallery), which turns instead to the looking-glass of television, with a wry sequence of freeze frames that stops the relentless flow to congeal its contrasts and recurrences. One of these caught my eye recently as an election poster in a neighbour's window: a mad-eyed Thatcher, caption added: 'the only loony left.'

Work by Helen Chadwick, Susan Hiller and Roberta Graham offers examples of varied formal strategies working on the surface of the image (photocopying, dyes, marks, frames), as well as a loosely shared preoccupation with the body and its representations (more of that next month, when The Body Politic, with Chadwick and Graham among its exhibitors, opens at the Photographers'). Graham Smith has enlarged a set of his father's snapshots from the 1930s and '50s, a testimony to the material power of the family album. Hannah Collins' monumental

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blue-washed archive record of the blitz in Hackney, shown with other panels from Evidence in the Streets, her investigation of history and memory in 'the experience of place', is a wonderfully resonant piece that also highlights one limitation of such an eclectic mix as this: it can hardly do justice to work that demands its own larger context. But the strength of this 'Bigger Picture' lies precisely in that eclecticism.

It seemed a good moment to consider just who is building this bigger picture now that Bradford's Photography Museum has announced its short-list for the £5,000 Fox Talbot prize, peak of the **Sun Life Awards**, launched last year, drawing nominations 'to reflect the whole range of British contemporary photography'. Each of the 40 nominees gets £100 and a place in the museum's Sun Life collection, and will go on show at the Photography Biennale next month. The short-list delivers three fine artists, one advertising photographer and five names that fall under a broad social documentary label. Two, Chris Killip and Paul Graham, appear in 'Bigger Picture'.

With the V&A and Bradford's National Museum, photography holds two major institutional spaces it didn't have at the start of the decade (plus a wider scattering of small, publicly-funded galleries). The V&A has cash allocated for collecting; Bradford relies on donation and sponsorship, and on the brash populism of its approach. The resulting gap between the celebration of photography-as-technology in its permanent galleries and the more dynamic space of the temporary 'art' shows has its problems, but there's a serious commitment to exhibition that seems to shelter open definitions of what counts in contemporary photography. Under the razzmatazz of the Sun Life Awards there's support and visibility for a huge range of work.

In photographic culture, as elsewhere, this diversity matters not just for its own sake, as if the liberal pluralism of room for all — tastes, audiences, minorities, etc. — fulfilled an end in itself; it's also vital to the avoidance of any canon that would narrow or stifle creative possibilities. The arguments continue about what's appropriate for gallery walls, but now more than ever the boundaries between artists and photographers give way in places. The crisis of photographic realism deflected some social documentarists towards more symbolic investigations of visual reality, and preoccupations distinctly close to those of artists working conceptually against dominant modes of vision. Among the first to incite suspicion of the image in this way were feminist photographers, and from their ranks a variegated photographic art practice has emerged, its concerns with identity and sexuality often joining a formal inquiry of how language and the visual representations most deeply embedded in our culture define the self.

At the popular end of the viewing spectrum, David Hockney's split-image collages, widely emulated by amateurs and ad-folk, propose a small shift in seeing. They're the starting point for another Bradford wheeze, which offers a Hockney-sponsored prize for an image or 3-D construction 'in which the convention of one-point western perspective is rejected'. It's called **'Unfreeze the Eye'**. □

Towards a Bigger Picture *is on at the V&A until 12 July.*

VIDEO

Return to Sender

Ian Penman

IN MY LAST COLUMN I unwisely employed a prophetic tone — especially unwise on the eve of any election — predicting that the last thing this could be was a video ballot. On the night, I was proved wrong. The essential victory was mine, though, even if you persist in showing me hard evidence to the contrary. Even if I persist in showing it to myself: for I now have for ever more — like the skeleton in the Scotch videotape ads — a video full of videos culled from the six-hour TV history of the pop video which the BBC re-ran during the twilight hours as the results came in. I have 1975 Led Zeppelin with a 1930s film; I have the caption 'Lab gain Edinburgh Central from Con' fixed over Donald Fagen's ('the key word is survival on the —') 'New Frontier'; 'Con gain Isle of Wight from All (Lib)' over Talking Heads' 'She Was' ('— she's making sure she is not dreaming'); and best of all, the same group's 'Burning Down The House' overlaid with 'Dafydd Thomas holds Meirionnydde Nant Conwy for Plaid Cymru'.

If life is already (the) text (in this case some kind of *Carry on Hegel* in which the jokes aren't funny any more), then much Art, postmodern or otherwise, is going to have a job keeping up. Which is precisely what many artists seem to *consider* to be their job.

Sender looked like a promising title for 'an exhibition of Contemporary Video Works,' I thought, when I received this collective's notice in the post: maybe someone's been swatting up on their Derrida; maybe there'll be something (a)cute like postcards of videos or vice versa; perhaps it's organised around Baudrillard's notion that we've all become receivers and transmitters, 'individual cells of transmission'. But no — a solitary quote from Barthes in the catalogue is the only nod to cross-channel theory. And what would a visual arts catalogue be these days without one?

Writing of death and the image, Barthes' dying speculations (in *Camera Lucida* especially) seem to have secured innumerable young pupils. He is used as a kind of posthumous endorsement, an André Previn of the Fine Arts cropped in to say a few words on the (death of the) subject, and assure us of the work's validity; we can be made to look for something to see in the dullest views. *Integration* — rather than mere supplementation — of text is more difficult; integration of more difficult texts (*viz,* the work of Valerio Adami using Derrida's *Glas*) rare; rejection or re-traction of rave theories perhaps most desirable of all (*viz,* Group Material's 'Resistance (Anti-Baudrillard)', discussed in the May issue of *Artscribe International*). Text as labour-saving device has unfortunately become the more usual norm.

Sender's exhibition logo features the monolithic presence of two transmitter dishes. We read this to suggest a loose party line: that the consumption of what bounces off these monsters is bad for you; and that we, the (ten) artists of *Sender,* by foregrounding this image, detach and disassociate ourselves from this pernicious economy. One already senses familiar (familiar like a fetish) concerns. To gain entry to *Sender*'s 'gallery space' one has to step or stoop, Alice-like, through an arch draped with various garments. On the other side we see that we have passed through a cupboard into a gaudy mocked-up sitting room. We shuffle nervously. There are some comfy chairs from which to view the first loop of works on a large black monitor. Next door is a bedroom done out in severely trendy monochrome, obviously on loan from or recently vacated by a rock journalist (that's my idea of a little joke), with the monitor squarely and 'inaccessibly' at the foot of the PVC bed (that's theirs). Finally, there's a kitchen, which amongst other things plays a tape called 'Small Appliances'.

Lyotard has described the postmodern work as that which 'puts forward the unpresentable in presentation itself'. *Sender,* they forewarn us in a Foreword, 'addresses the place of video art and its presentation [. . .] the relationship between tapemaker and audience at that point of engagement and consumption with screen.' Can one consume *with* (the) screen? But I liked *Sender*'s presentation, even if 'liking' it seemed somehow beside the point; wasn't I supposed to be upset and overturned? Unfortunately the works themselves were woefully predictable, addressed only to their makers, to their own place of production, to the place and concern of video-as-art; and as *disruption,* which belongs to the previous century. It assumes a picture of sender and receiver which media technology has superceded, a picture which is at best complacent and at worst patronising.

Typical was the footage of a man roped to an armchair and fed bittersweet cut-ups of advertising slogans. Given the level of irony and referentiality in our everyday viewing — TV, film and advertising daily scavenge and re-appropriate their own codes and laws — it seems simplistic to assert that our consumption of images is something to be *remedied.* People can and do choose to switch off. (I can contradict myself a second time on this point — it *was* a video election: from the onset of TV's saturation coverage, video rentals went zooming up all over the country.)

Sender seems to be no more than a graphic illustration of the problems posed to (and not yet by) video-as-'Art'. Its simulation of cosiness is all too cosy, its subversion of our viewing routines merely routine. Rather like the reviewer who found the hi-tech cassette deck the sexiest thing in *9½ Weeks,* I found my wandering gaze most powerfully concentrated by the beautiful Sony monitors. □

Sender *is at Battersea Arts Centre until 5 July, Wed-Sun.*

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CINEMA

Fatal strategies

Judith Williamson

White of the Eye (18)
Cannons Haymarket, Shaftesbury Avenue, Fulham Road
Nobody's Fool (15)
Cannons Fulham Road, Tottenham Court Road

SINCE LAST WEEK I have found not only that *homme fatal* doesn't have an 'e' but also plenty of fresh fodder for my new theory. Donald Cammell's **White of the Eye** is a chic thriller whose structure is remarkably similar to *The Morning After* in that solving the plot involves choosing between two men who might be the killer. In both films one of these is the ex-, and one the current lover/husband of a woman who provides the subjective pivot through which we experience the choice. This is also the framework for the much less macabre **Nobody's Fool**, in which Rosanna Arquette has to choose between her old lover and a newcomer, Eric Roberts.

This switch to a female subjective base, in which *men* are the unknown factor, is increasingly common in films; and if the old *femme fatale* can be seen as a projection of *male* sexuality, it would make sense to examine the new *homme fatal* not as a screen expression of anything about men, but rather as indicative of an attitude towards women and *our* deisres — part of a general interest in 'female sexuality' at the moment.

The *homme fatal* menace in *Jagged Edge* is activated by the woman's 'unprofessional' sexual relationship. In *The Morning After*, it is only after Jane Fonda sleeps with him that the film taunts us with Jeff Bridges' potential treachery — leaving Fonda's subjective view only at one key moment, to show him reaching for a gun. And *White of the Eye*, though its central couple are married, draws particular attention to Joan White's desire for her husband — indeed their decade-long relationship is measured in the span between their first fuck on the floor with him on top and their most recent, with her on top — scenes which the film cuts back to repeatedly. The first time we see husband and wife together, after we have already been shown the first horrific murder, she takes him to bed; and at the very end, after she knows he *is* the murderer, there is another hot sex scene. The film is punctuated with shots of Paul White's crotch and, in a rage of jealousy at his infidelities, Joan starts yelling about his big dick. As in film noir, where the unfaithful wife would also be capable of murder, so sexual treachery is here made to coincide with much worse crimes.

Skipping over the film's clever visual and conceptual structure, which is all about eyes/seeing/hearing (Paul White has uncanny audio powers, his counterpart, Joan's ex-boyfriend, has video-memory vision) we are left with a plot which, like *The Morning After*, sets up *both* men as a potentially dangerous even though ultimately only one is. In both scenarios there is a non-WASP 'ex' set against a chunky handyman type — for Paul White is another of these

Would you get in a car with this man? Eric Roberts in *Nobody's Fool*

tinkerers-in-workshop men, a technical wizard; another backyard inventor with the slightly Neanderthal morality that goes with it in all these films. He justifies his murders of middle-class women by the fact that they lead lives of vacant yuppydom, and part of the film's imagery, as in the opening murder sequence, is that of despoiled yuppy decor: a mêlée of wine, meat and tulips, overturned designer chairs, smashed cuisinarts and broken glass tables — like mayhem in Heals, a Class War daydream. I'll come back to yuppy-destruct imagery in future weeks; it certainly seems to be deeply associated with eruptions of sex and violence in current US films.

The use of yuppy kitchen accoutrements as an iconography of danger is reminiscent of the scene in *9½ Weeks*, where Mickey Rourke slices vegetables with a vicious and expensive assortment of knives and gadgets before getting into yet more funky sex. He too can be seen as a *homme fatal*: sexy, gorgeous, but with a fatal flaw. In this case, it is merely kinkiness, but the way *9½ Weeks* works is precisely by keeping you on the edge of your seat in case he *does* do something more violent — and it is this *sense* of danger, even if ultimately unrealised, that characterises the type. Even in the basically harmless *Nobody's Fool*, the dishy New Guy is presented as potentially dangerous: he looks at Rosanna Arquette with a strange intensity, accosts her when she's walking alone in deserted places, and finally takes her for a drive, in a sequence that's — momentarily — very like *Smooth Talk*. He starts to confide in her about his past acts of violence and, just when he starts to seem wild, an accident ahead forces him to drive right off the road — making him appear really unstable.

Today's *homme fatal* does have some antecedents; Cary Grant in *Suspicion* and Joseph Cotton in *Shadow of a Doubt* play apparently trustworthy men who cannot be trusted — but part of their impact has been that these were the exception rather than the rule. Only in horror films have men never been trustworthy; in terms of the gender of sexual threat, this genre could be seen as the opposite of film noir.

But what's striking about the present spate of *hommes fatals* in movies is that almost *any* man who's presented as desirable seems slightly spooky. A sexy husband; a wonderful new boyfriend; a gorgeous lover who adores you — these are all men who are *too good to be true*. And the two-men new/old formula (in *9½ Weeks* there's a nice but boring ex-husband too) gives an added frisson along the lines of 'just when you thought it was safe to go back in the water'. No matter which side the film comes down on — old lover good, new lover bad/new lover good, *old* lover bad — the very fact of sexual choice for a woman is problematised in these movies. Perhaps *this* is a post-sex cinema. □

TRAILERS

While *Dona Herlinda and her Son* plays at the Hampstead Everyman and the Cannon Piccadilly, there is a chance tosee other work by out gay Mexican director Jaime Humberto Hermosillo in the NFT's June season of his films. Bookings on 01-928 3232/3.

DANCE

Between the idea

Stephanie Jordan

Second Stride
Bloomsbury Theatre
Laurie Booth and **Toby Sedgwick**
ICA

SECOND STRIDE CHOREOGRAPHER Ian Spink and his regular collaborators Orlando Gough (composer) and Antony McDonald (designer) must be the most knowledge-hungry, research-obsessed team working in dance today. Their method of assembling a piece is doubtless great fun: Gough introduces an idea which inspires Spink to read around and introduce another, then McDonald and lighting designer Peter Mumford enter the game, the references snowball, the plots thicken, etc. But, in that network of cross-references, the connections become so obscure that they confound any but these colleagues. Perhaps an irony of such work is that is may achieve importance for an audience simply because it sets them working at its puzzles.

Certain subject matters respond better than others to this treatment. The last Second Stride collaboration, *Bösendorfer Waltzes*, used for sources Surrealism and Dadaism, the resultant piece a sort of anarchic artistic conceit about anarchic artistic conceits. The religious eclecticism of the new *Weighing the Heart* is another matter. Copious programme documentation apart, we must ask why the tales of Tobias and the Angel and *Die Zauberflöte* have been selected and entwined for Part One; why Part Two should deal with various noteworthy ascetics and religious figures: John the Baptist, Isis, the Magdalen, St Anthony, Simone Weil, Mohammed; and why the parodistic treatment and inconclusive, largely improvised 'knees up' at the end? The musicians of the new jazz group Man Jumping, of which Gough is a member, are ranged across the back of the stage, eclecticism likewise their motto, employing here phase, Arab and Oriental sources.

If anything, *Weighing the Heart* must be a celebration of scepticism, since likening Christian

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mythology to ancient Egyptian or Freemasonic is to explain its symbols as universal aberrations or superstitions. But the esoterism and meaning-game construction militate against the clarity of even this statement.

Yet the humour and brio of the whole theatrical endeavour are seductive, the rapidity of ideas impressive. In Part One, we see the bewitched Sarah of the Tobias story and her series of doomed husbands, juxtaposed with Tamino, encountering the serpent and receiving, with Papageno, the magic flute and bells; into the picturesque house wherein Pamina is captive rushes the Crocodile (Catherine Becque) with whom Tobias and the angel tangle. Fluently, the dancers pass in and out of costumes and characters, named and unnamed: nuns, ladies-in-waiting, husbands, angels. The reference to weighing the heart (the Egyptian ceremony for the dead) occurs at the core of the work, where the wedding of Tamino and Pamina turns into a funeral, the couple laid against tables and decorated with red carnations and offerings of food.

There are choreographic episodes of great vitality. Tamino's 'confession' is a curious dance phrase devised around an A to Z register of body parts (another idea from the Egyptian Book of the Dead) obsessively repeated and finally disintegrating. The Magdalen's dance (Philippe Giraudeau travesti) is a wickedly undulating Spanish number, culminating in her eroticised divine ecstasy as a host of angels arrives to raise her quaking figure heavenwards. The use of a multi-purpose set and props is fascinating, as always with Second Stride, though often the most striking effects are the starkest, like the bespectacled Weil who simply stands and gazes at the vision of two haloes of ascending and descending light.

It is a queer fish of a piece then: its theatrical vigour the more astonishing, considering the diffusion and sophistry of the concept. With three new members, Becque, Steve Goff and Tim Persent, Second Stride remains our most distinguished group of dancer-actors.

While **Laurie Booth** and **Toby Sedgwick** in *Mercurial States* cannot match such virtuoso theatrical construction, as conveyors of a meaning that is more than specifically dance they are superior. Their scenario is a short story by G. K. Chesterton, *The Noticeable Conduct of Professor Chad*, which, as if an article of faith for dancers, expresses belief in the communicative power of movement. The ethnologist Chad, to the apprehension of his three whaleboned sisters, abandons verbal communication for a vocabulary based on movement. Sir Basil Grant, summoned to diagnose insanity, instead becomes captivated by the professor's research. Booth, as Chad, is discovered in eccentric black gown and cowl covering one eye, surrounded by easels supporting spidery caricatures of figures in movement. The three sisters are represented by three tall dummies on castors, black with white wimples: nuns, nurses or sinister apparitions. The conversation in motion begins, Chad first introducing Grant to the intrinsic joy of small movements and simple gestures; later, they can create complex sentences and motions enriched with reference, their relationship evolving from student/teacher into companionship as mimicry becomes repartee and, finally, they leap from great coiled springs as if taking flight in their new found language. We are drawn into their excitement and exhaustion. The dummy sisters, representing Edwardian conventionality, at first seemingly uncomprehending, become disapproving, disdainful and, ultimately, dispensable.

Hints are there of other creatures and cultures: Booth's initial doodles in bent-legged, turned-out positions are Oriental; his playful twists into a Capoeira posture Brazilian. Philip Jeck's sound collage and the effects thrown up on the backcloth also resonate, suggesting the natural phenomena that the men behold in wonder, or a thunderstorm complete with lightning flashes and gothic windows, shades of Frankenstein, as if they are concocting something magical and terrible. At the first performance pacing was imperfect, some improvised games lingering too long for interest, but this may well be transitory. The premise is sturdy and refreshingly immediate in its appeal to the audience. □

TELEVISION

Rather shocking

Hugo Williams

I WONDER which Shakespeare play will turn out to be about Aids. *Hamlet* seems the most likely candidate: the cause of the prince's manic soul-searching finally revealed after 500 years incubation. Most of Chekhov, too, will probably turn out to be about hospice-bound HIV-positives, especially *The Seagull*. In the meantime we had Ibsen's own version of *Hamlet*, the highly venereal **Ghosts** (BBC2). Kenneth Branagh, who played the infected Oswald, even saw the part as 'a run-up to Hamlet', which he'd like to play with the RSC.'

It seems this rather wordy and predictable piece was outrageous in its day, 'an open drain . . . a dirty act done openly', even though syphilis was never actually mentioned. (The Victorians had all the fun.) Euphemisms abounded, of course, making everything worse. Oswald was 'spiritually broken' he said, 'ruined', 'worm eaten from birth'. He would never be able to 'work' again now that he had 'learnt the truth' and everything in him had 'denegerated into ugliness'. In case we hadn't got the point by now, his father was 'depraved' before he was born and 'the inevitable' happened. Now 'the sins of the father have been visited', etc., even though Oswald had never 'lived intemperately' himself — and wouldn't be able to now, alas, despite having just met Natasha Richardson, a strapping maid in his mother's house who turned out to be his half-sister by the same syphilitic sire.

It was all the most frightfully bad luck and the play required acting of the sternest kind to beat the unconscious comedy out of it as one awful piece of news followed the next. Michael Gambon, Judi Dench and especially Freddie Jones were well equal to this and translator Michael Meyer's resounding sentences rattled from their lips exactly like lines from a play. Too much so; in fact they never stopped. Can it be that the limited time-slot of *Theatre Night* demands this machine-gun delivery? Where were the gaps? The pauses for guilty reflection? Atmospheric duties seemed to have been handed over to the designer, who came up with the classic three-room theme opening mistily into the past, where the 'ghosts' could hover, kiss and break down in one another's arms.

The whole thing was very much a Victorian freakshow, a visit to Bedlam to see the funny lunatics, with the difference that here it was the bored middle class who were the freaks. As such, it really needed to be seen on the stage for its inversions to take human form. It all seemed very far away and long ago, jabbering away in its little box. Or highly comical.

Laurence Olivier's 80th Birthday Celebrations (BBC2), were muted in the extreme and more like term-time than holidays. Olivier was seen sitting in his garden with director Patrick Garland, who seemed to be teaching him things about various poems he had got with him, then handing them to Olivier to see if he could read them out loud. Mostly he could, but he was clearly happier with a piece of 'Paradise Lost' he had got by heart from years ago 'when I was playing a literate type of bloke in some goddam film I made for RKO'. One assumes they had been over the poems before, but Olivier's face was a picture of shocked bravado as he caught sight of Larkin's famous first line, 'They fuck you up your mum and dad.' He did his best with it, but Garland pressed home his attack with the other Larkin poem with 'fucking' in it, 'High Windows'. 'Well, look at this,' giggled Olivier, 'it really is rather shocking.' 'Extraordinary stuff,' he said as he finished, apparently having no difficulty with its incomprehensible ending. My favourite moment came at the end of W. H. Auden's 'Lay Your sleeping head, my love/Human on my faithless arm'. 'I couldn't understand a bloody word of it,' said his Lordship, turning to camera after a rather confident reading. 'Could you understand a bloody word of it? I couldn't understand a bloody word of it.' Well, at last someone has blown the whistle on that brain-twister. Hats off to Larry! The irony is that it's destined to be used as archive footage for eternity, minus its deflating coda. He ended with a piece from *The Tempest*. Had he ever been tempted to play Prospero? 'No, not really. He's so sonorous, you know. Not a bloody laugh in sight.' Garland: 'I suppose he does lack humour at times.' Olivier: 'Not a fucking giggle to be found.' You understood that such things were best left to Johnny Gielgud.

In *Aretha Franklin* on **Omnibus** (BBC1) it was interesting to discover why the Queen of Soul, despite so many natural gifts, never really touched the popular imagination in the way that Diana Ross or Tammy Wynette once did. Aretha was the daughter of a famous preacher who encouraged his very special daughter in everything she did, while always reminding her that she was 'a church musician' first. Listening to her early recordings, you can hear the lack of intimacy that came from that first testing ground, the edge of threat and narcissism that narrowed her public and made her a musician's musician. 'She cut herself off from three-quarters of the repertoire,' said her producer at Atlantic, Jerry Wexler. 'She wouldn't do a torch song or a begging woman, none of that "come back to me one more time" stuff'. It all paid off in the end. Aretha has come through a difficult marriage and a dubious record career to emerge victorious as the other half of successful Wham!ster George Michael. Her uncompromising tone has found its period at last. □

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WORK IN PROGRESS

Happy trails

Naseem Khan

NOBODY who has spent much time on, in or trying to escape from the South Bank Centre could have any great affection for the confines of the place. With its bleak perspectives, discoloured concrete and piss-smelling corners, the South Bank is a seedy memorial to the grand hopes of yesterday's planners. Strange then that a group of schoolchildren managed recently to demonstrate positive appreciation of the South Bank and its possibilities in a series of events that together went to make up what its directors call an 'animated trail'.

The concept — carried through in this case by the Company of Imagination — is not particularly strange to 'Fringe' followers, its aim being to illuminate, interpret or even challenge a familiar space, be it street or spinney. Govan's historical pageant in last year's Mayfest, for instance, had its peripatetic audience encountering scenes or tableaux at significant points of their journey through the Glasgow suburb. Lumière and Son's rich *Deadwood* led its audience round Kew Gardens at night, startling them with images and creatures of sub-tropical rainforests.

In this case, the children (from two South London primary schools) set their sights on a more modest end, the South Bank Centre itself; its function, feel, shape, colour, atmosphere. As the audience trailed submissively behind their guide, strange things began to happen around them. Looking down from one terrace, a group of children in red and yellow costumes could be seen below, busily treading out careful patterns to a regular percussion accompaniment. Another group emerged from a concrete, vault-like space, drawing the audience in and on in two lines of welcoming movement. Under fitful rain, the audience moved on, spotting sudden new sights — the heads of what appeared to be five elongated cranes, for example, bobbing like birds over a parapet.

Each 'event', on six different locations, took its inspiration from an aspect of the particular site: the texture of the concrete in one spot generated both dances and sculptures. The unexpected conjunction of rather tentative trees, sand and concrete created beautiful banners, whose patterns were echoed in costumes. At one point, the propinquity and character of the river were picked up in the Indian-dance derived movements and the shimmering tin and gauze costumes.

The event was not equally successful in all its parts. The section that tried to emphasise the ever changing character of the South Bank's cultural programme was fiddly and too short. The music component was noticeably weaker than the dance and visual arts. Nonetheless, it did make you see the place again with fresh eyes — huge credit to the children (who firmly established themselves in the character of host) and the organisers who'd worked with them, channelling their reactions into actual shape.

I had expected something of the same quality from *The Last Wild Wood in Sector 88*, one of the steadily growing breed of operas for, by or with young people. In fact, the initiative here came from professional adults rather than children, but this was still a valid — and delightful — example of how to provide opera for the young. Since the writer was Adrian Mitchell and the composer the RSC's Guy Woolfenden, it is not surprising that the work catered sensitively to both the musical and interest range of its 70 or so young performers.

The opera was inspired by protests in India, where women embraced trees to save them from felling. The trees in this piece are a much loved local wood, about to be sold for development. The children, its chief users, are scorned at the public enquiry, but they hug the trees and win at least a reprieve. The simple story does not overload the hour-long opera with detail and allows Woolfenden's attractive and not undemanding music to carry the action forward. Performed by children in the lower secondary age range, augmented by choruses from whichever school the touring show visits, it makes a useful addition to the small body of existing work for children to perform. For Binfield First School, where I saw the show, its value went further. Binfield is particularly strong on conservation, having the rare asset of a small patch of woodland big enough for its resident fox, hedgehogs and a pond. But it was only the action of a teacher and her class, who placed themselves firmly in front of the bulldozers, which stopped its destruction a few years ago.

Conservation, but of a different nature, lay at the heart of a third event, and one that also used music to express urgent concerns. *The Gates of Greenham* was a tour de force: a full-scale oratorio — performed by 160 amateur singers ('stiffened', as the Arts Council used to say, with four professionals and two actor-narrators) and a full orchestra in the vast spaces of Manchester's Free Trade Hall, for one night only. Its composer, Tony Biggins, had knitted together a libretto largely from women's writing on Greenham, matching it with a long, highly charged score. His aim, said Biggins, was a 'tuneful, whistleable and non-esoteric' work that would 'relish its indifference to the avant-garde'.

But his score is by no means simple-minded. It moves easily from suggesting the lyrical, idealistic and quasi-mystical early stages of the peace camp to evoking the violence and discomfort of later days, and contains some extremely moving and well sung sections. The opera — and the whole occasion — was an unromantic tribute to the courage and perseverance of the Greenham women. □

Books

PUBLISHING

Read in tooth and claw

Boyd Tonkin

When publishers gobble each other up, the rumblings and burps and bits they spit out affect our choices as readers. At 10.25pm this Friday, BBC1's Omnibus *will examine the book world's Big Bang; here, we explore its implications and suggest how its dangers could be curtailed*

'IF I HAD the time,' says Faber's chairman Matthew Evans, 'I'd like to study the extraordinary similarity between farmers and publishers over the last 20 years. They're always whingeing and moaning. But you never see a poor farmer, and you hardly ever see a poor publisher.'

In the eyes of some of its leaders, independent publishing lurches for ever from crisis to crisis. Only the name of the affliction changes: television; inflation; taxes; takeovers. These days, though, you do stumble across the occasional real corpse (Pluto, for instance) and a few ailing firms who sink into a corporate embrace before their final hour. The feisty Anthony Blond was swallowed by Century Hutchinson a couple of months back; Allison and Busby was bought by W. H. Allen on 29 May.

In the background, the leviathans of print snap at each other from either side of the Atlantic. The Newhouse group (through Random House) gobbles up the debt-ridden and mismanaged Chatto, Cape and Bodley Head consortium, though their stronger sister Virago breaks loose. Robert Maxwell clutches in vain at the American media empire of Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. In the other direction (so the rumours go) Simon and Schuster covets Methuen's owner ABP. To the multi-media transnational, the book becomes a raw commodity ripe for refinement into TV or T-shirts: the Brent Crude of the wired society.

Meanwhile, back on the editorial floor, a largely female workforce toils away for salaries many employers wouldn't dare to offer a competent typist. Still further down the ladder languish authors. Slaves at the mill of words, the majority find that their access to review pages, advertisement space and shop shelves shrinks as publishers pour resources into blockbusters. In this Darwinian world, every *Destiny* means a dozen books doomed to instant oblivion.

Writers and their agents often treat media concern at the erosion of small-scale publishing as so much sentimental drivel. They long for nothing more than a house, whatever its size, willing to sign and keep the Society of Authors/Writers' Guild Minimum Terms Agreement, fix up an in-house paperback deal with assured royalties and devote a smidgeon of thought and cash to promotion.

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'The homo Vaughnianus is painfully aware of inhabiting a world where the relationship between cause and effect is, if not mysterious, at best rather tenuous.' There is of course more to Robert Vaughn than Napoleon Solo — but without John B. Murray's ROBERT VAUGHN: A CRITICAL STUDY (Thessaly Press, PO Box 130, London E11 1BP; £9) we'd never have known just how *much* more, or appreciated how Vaughn 'demands expansion not only of critical categories and methodologies but also of audience expectations *and* responses to what they may only *think* they are watching'. The (definitive) chapter on Vaughn's performance as Lee in *The Magnificent Seven* alone cites Spinoza, Sartre, Aragon, Céline, Wittgenstein and Rimbaud; yet theoretical speculation is grounded in close textual analysis — 'At "secrets, don't you?", Vaughn delivers a smile of great cunning, which contrasts interestingly with the shrewdness in the eyes.' Would the multinational conglomerates have had the courage to publish a work like this? No, they wouldn't. (Malcolm Imrie)

But will the onward march of 'rationalisation' in the book business sweep away distinctive voices as well as the muddle that sheltered them? Talk to the independents themselves and it feels like the best of times and the worst of times. Bullishness in the city has spilled over into finance for new ventures. Bloomsbury Books launched a select list on a tide of adulation in April. This month, Headline Books set up shop with a package of mass-market fantasy, murder and romance: independence without innovation.

At Faber and Faber, however, flair and safety do still seem to coincide. With the strongest poetry list in Europe, decked out in designer jackets, the company will be able to release Seamus Heaney's latest collection, *The Haw Lantern*, in a print-run of over 30,000. Its fiction stretches from Golding to Kundera and includes some unlikely recent hits: Garrison Keillor's *Lake Wobegon Days* and Vikram Seth's sonnet-novel *The Golden Gate*.

Rivals cast envious glances at Faber's annual million-pound bonus, via the T.S. Eliot copyright, from *Cats*. According to Matthew Evans: 'We'd still be all right without it. But it has allowed us to invest in our paperback list, which accounts for 80 per cent of sales. We've been able to pay more attention to design. And, although this sounds very pompous, we can protect the integrity of the backlist.' Having a weighty backlist can mean unexpected windfalls as fashions turn. Wallace Stevens, doyen of deconstructionists, now sells well after years of obscurity.

With around 180 books due next year, Evans thinks Faber 'large enough to have muscle, but small enough to know what's going on'. The view from Queen Square finds publishing as 'bizarre, eccentric and highly entrepreneurial' as ever, with chances for fleet-footed operators created by the inertia of the giants: 'Some groups get so large that you can walk between their legs.'

Publishers of the *Spitting Image* books and Sex Pistols illustrator Jamie Reid, Faber now keeps a watching brief on popular culture. It famously hired Pete Townshend to oversee its appeal to Youth — amid cries of derision from callow trendies for whom The Who and *The Cantos* dated from roughly the same era. Matthew Evans stresses the growing role of the tie-in, as the printed word becomes a trigger for other media: 'Print is the ultimate source of many forms of exploitation. Control it and you're in a strong position.' To prove the point, Townshend and Ted Hughes have just joined forces on a musical version of the latter's children's poem, *The Iron Man*.

John Calder does share something with Faber: Samuel Beckett. Faber does the single plays and smart collections; Calder the scattered remnants of the prose. Its managing director is a tireless bender of politicians' ears in the cause of good writing. He spent the election campaign with the Tactical Voting lobby in Scotland: 'The Tories don't give a damn about books.' John Calder has probably done more than the massed ranks of academia to bring the French avant-garde (surrealist and *nouveau romanciers* alike) to the grudging notice of the Brits.

Now, however, money from the Arts Council and French culture ministry has dried up. 'We haven't placed an ad anywhere for the last nine months. I spend six months of the year out on the road selling in the shops.' Last year, his 18 new titles earned only a third of their costs: that refers to invoices sent, not payments received. This throws much of the burden of survival onto the backlist: 'We do find that we can do better from a reprint.' ▷

Perdition
a play by Jim Allen
the revised text of the play
documents
letters from Erich Fried,
Noam Chomsky, Maxime Rodinson
press debate
from all booksellers £4.95 & £12.00
Ithaca Press 13 Southwark Street London SE1 1RQ

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Overseas sales remain crucial, despite the exorbitant cost of office space in New York and the nightmare of an overvalued pound. He sees subsidy or extreme specialisation as the only lifelines: 'We work harder and harder to sell what we have. But you can't force the public to buy books.' What every independent needs, perhaps, is a stake in one of the lush backwaters of professional and academic book-making. *Tolley's Tax Tables* trip off the tongue of accountants rather than literary editors, but they recently earned £840,000 profit on a turnover of £5 million.

Looking over the sector as a whole, the birth of Bloomsbury and Headline seems to show that fragmentation can march hand in hand with concentration. Top-heavy hybrids may continue to shed their more free-wheeling staff into lightweight newcomers. But, given a depressed consumer economy, a tight-fisted City or the chaos and agony of VAT on books (formally requested by the EEC), this space for new entrants would rapidly close. Then, the only hope for revival among the independents might lie in state intervention of the kind embodied by Canada's law on 'compulsory divestiture'. This isn't an initiation ritual at one of those schools we're free to send our children to, but part of a mildly protectionist and anti-American measure passed in 1985, which stipulates that all changes of control among foreign-owned publishers must lead within two years to the sale of a majority of the equity to Canadian nationals. So Penguin, who last year bought the Canadian subsidiary with the American parent of New English Library, must dispose of much of the former: *carte blanche* for management buy-outs. (Read Mariana Valverde next week on the threat to this Canadian system.)

'Compulsory divestiture', or something like it, would bring anguish to mid-Atlantic managers and glee to their more frustrated underlings. But we're not going to live in that kind of political landscape for at least four years. □

FICTION

Against nature

Paul Hallam

Rainforest
JENNY DISKI *Methuen* £10.95

OF SINK SMELLS in Sussex and forest stench in Borneo, of bluebells and cowslips or a teeming vegetal mass fighting for light, Jenny Diski writes with great precision and power. Both landscapes prove more attractive than her main character Mo, a priggish, ever-sensible woman who 'toned down everything until it became overall nothing'. Mo's childhood and later life, first as ecology lecturer, later as obsessive cleaner of yuppie houses, is told sometimes in the third, sometimes first person, partly through flashback and recollection, partly through dream. The shifts of time, place and perspective are deftly handled. Between the lecturing and the cleaning Mo undergoes a traumatic, to say the least, experience in a rainforest whilst out on fieldwork.

Two quotes preface the novel: from a physicist on 'underlying order' confident that chaos is simply 'missing information', and from a natural historian arguing that 'many events are uncaused in any conventional sense of the word'. And the order/chaos, meaning/meaningless debate rages through every page of this tightly structured book.

At first I resented the early statements of theme, the meticulous patterning of debate. Arguments find their way into the book far too easily. A lecturer heroine allows room for articulate colleagues to argue fiercely the philosophical implications of the new physics. And for their sex lives neatly to illustrate their theories.

You know Mo's in for a heart of darkness experience long before she reaches the forest. When she finally goes to measure growth and decay in neat, pegged-out squares, something will surely break. But not everyone is predictable; characters change. Mo's mother is finely drawn, her Sussex 'niceness' concealing a considerable cool. Her sentimentality — she saves woodlice from the fire — is later tempered. She gradually comes to accept the distance between herself and Mo.

Mo's own changes are more complex. Before her field trip she shows more concern for the wine stain on her carpet than the body of the spiller, a man she badly wants but rejects. She relies on friends or colleagues for argument and cosy sex. Gradually her forest seems less like an even carpet under the sky, more a terrifying, writhing mass of dancing particles. An earnest ecologist trying to save the world for future generations, only slowly does Mo come to realise something of her own self-loathing and disgust. Only once does her body get to move 'for its own pleasure'. When resistance to passion fails, madness threatens. Sex destroys, spills, wrecks order.

The forest itself observes Mo, from within her and without, unable to comprehend this fetishistic human. It's a very odd and convincing book, and bleak. Mo gets drenched in all kinds of ways, before 'rehabilitation' to an ordered life that seems no answer at all, merely preferable perhaps to madness.

Rainforest is less clogged with subplot than Diski's first novel, *Nothing Natural*, but it's a similar, tough exploration of solitude and sexual need. Diski rejects the givens of the left, whether feminist or ecological; she ruthlessly checks platitudes. *Rainforest* is no advertisement for the Greens, no one really answers the argument that those who 'noted and preserved and conserved' are essentially outside of nature, takers with mixed and confused motives. Multinational destroyers have more in common with the forest, since destruction even to the detriment of the species is part of nature's pattern. It's not that the book advocates destruction, simply that Diski refuses to sentimentalise, and questions the 'for future generations' motive trotted out by conservationists.

Diski's intensity and descriptive clarity finally overcame any initial misgivings. When I put the book down I needed air; I'd been horribly gripped. Perhaps that's why my laughter was disproportionate on noticing that *Rainforest* was printed and bound by the sonorous sounding 'Redwood Burn' of the rather less resonant address, Trowbridge, Wilts. □

FICTION

Romance languages

Helen Birch

Without Falling
LESLIE DICK *Serpent's Tail* £9.95 & £4.95

ON THE SURFACE, at least, it would be easy to sneer at Leslie Dick's first novel. It displays its allegiance to the kind of hip New York writing that is currently *de rigueur*: peppered with in-jokes; its brattish, WASP heroine on the edge of breakdown; its *mise-en-scène* lifted straight from the pages of *The Face*. Leslie Dick lives and works in London now and her writing has been published in *Bomb*, *Emergency*, *Semiotext(e)*; she's firmly located as avant-garde, experimental.

But *Without Falling* is above all a *passionate* book. It touches a place that the specious pleasures of stylish play leave cold, and justifies its experimental project through the intangibility of its subject: the language of female desire.

Romance fiction has occupied a special place in the woman reader's psyche, tantalising her with the promise of fulfilment through (hetero) sexual love which proves impossible in life. The melodrama of the Victorian women's novel, on the other hand, contained within itself the unspoken text of female desire articulated as madness — the madwoman in the attic. Freud, developing his theories at around the same time, invented the family romance, an idea which has so absorbed and permeated our culture that his 'problem' with femininity and female sexual passion is often overlooked. Feminisms have either berated Freud for this difficulty — his 'victimisation' of women — or else have risen to the challenge, discovering histories and literatures of resistance. Leslie Dick's novel hovers on the fringes of all these ideas. It is a romantic novel, in the sense that it focuses on heterosexual love; but it is also post-romantic: acutely self-conscious of the impossibility of plenitude through romance, yet aware of that desire as a lived reality for women.

Without Falling takes 'falling' — in love, into unconsciousness, into death or chaos, the fallen woman — as its theme and searches for a language to describe it. Femininity, as the novel makes clear, has been stifled by discourses of romance, madness, punishment, Woman. It is rare these days to find a novel which is so fresh, so harsh, exciting *and* funny, and which perfectly fulfils our need as readers to be drawn in and find ourselves somewhere within it. The best thing about *Without Falling* is that, for all its clever games and irony, the narrative never detaches itself from its subject, never slips into the slick vacuity of modest satire.

Tracy is a young woman who protests too much about female passivity, but who doesn't want to be phallic either. She lusts, rages, suffers through a series of affairs with 'married' (in the strictly modern sense) men, and creates dramas out of the uncertainty and ecstasy of one-night stands. Feminism is here too: Tracy undergoes analysis, tries to unravel her feelings about her analyst's

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pregnancies, desperately hopes that forming a bond with the Other Woman will break the triangle and eclipse the man. The twists and turns of her passions, the horrors of abortion, self-mutilation, her fantasies of killing the male object and herself are all part of 'a story she couldn't tell' — all the narratives are used up. So it's a book about writing too; it nudges at Freud's poser 'What do Women Want?' and finds the question itself wanting. The novel examines the lost emotional and physical realities of women's lives — the blood, the pain, the obsession — and steps inside the stories which have evaded them and turned them into mystery.

Leslie Dick takes Tracy back to childhood, to her father's adulteries, her sister's recurrent illnesses, her mother's anger, her father's punishments. Tracy attempts to piece together the shards of memory, knowing that they are all reconstructions, myths, rituals. Her recollections blur with her adult knowledge, become part of psychoanalysis and fictions; they are 'pictures . . . [which] merely add the necessary touch of realism to carry the burden of sentimentality'. Tracy compares herself to her mother and the codes of romance to her own confusion about love and self identity: 'When love is about narcissistic identity, you can do no wrong'; 'love is . . . pleasure made out of the possibility of pain'.

Leslie Dick's careful layering of past and present, pleasure and pain, analysis and imagination, points towards a story as yet untold, a set of associations and connections made but not set down. The agonising pleasure of reading the book is in watching transformations take place on the page and in our own heads, seeing elaborate games open up into genuine possibilities as the Other comes into focus. □

DIASPORA

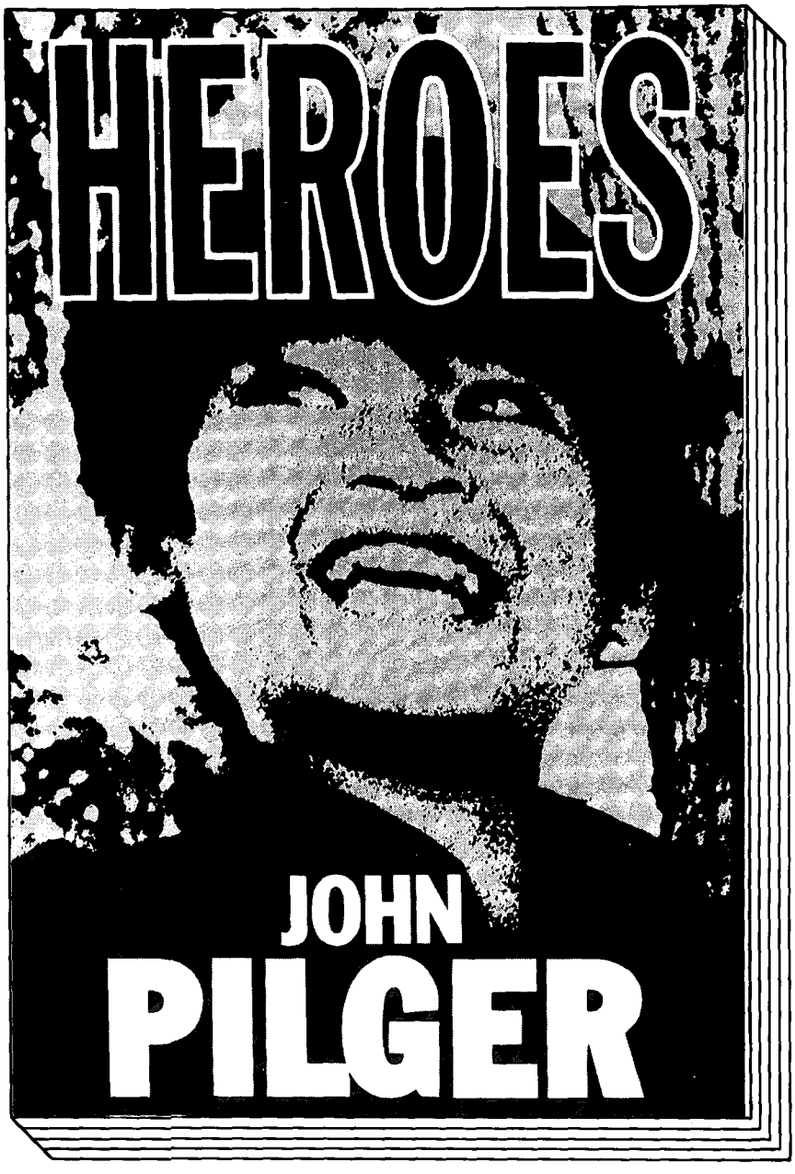
In his master's steps

Paul Gilroy

African and Caribbean Politics: From Kwame Nkrumah to Maurice Bishop
MANNING MARABLE *Verso* £24.95 & £8.95

MANNING MARABLE'S PROLIFIC output — seven substantial books in as many years — has established him in the front rank of Afro-america's political writers. This volume of essays concludes a project surveying 'the intricate connections between contemporary Black political movements in the USA, the Caribbean and Africa'. The American component has already been published as *Black American Politics*. Here, four lengthy pieces examine the history of Africa and its diaspora. Two deal briskly with general historical and theoretical issues while the others present detailed discussions of the strategic problems involved in developing 'structures of revolutionary democracy' in Ghana and Grenada.

Marable's odyssey takes him between the Scylla of reductive class politics and the Charybdis of black nationalism. He writes as a Marxist, capital M, and lays a claim to the legacy of black radical thinkers like DuBois, James, Fanon and Cabral.



'Pilger is the closest we now have to the great correspondents of the 1930s' *GUARDIAN*

'A passionate and utterly absorbing collection of reports from the firing lines, both abroad (Vietnam, Cambodia, South Africa) and home (the East End, the miners' strike, Fleet Street) by one of the dwindling bunch of journalists in this country with heart as well as a hard nose . . . Pilger's *magnum opus*' *TIME OUT*

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However, he pursues a more orthodox path than any of them. Seemingly content with the basic navigational instruments provided by historical materialism, his guiding star is an elusive sense of egalitarian socialism pre-figured in the struggles of radically subordinated groups.

His wide-ranging, activist scholarship is centrally concerned with how an authentically democratic socialism can be constructed in societies which lack the revolutionary agency of a fully-fledged, industrial proleteriat. The essays are unified by a concern with the dangers of Bonapartism and the lure of authoritarian pseudo-socialisms which are particularly strong in colonial and post-colonial contexts. With these issues in mind, Marable premises his argument on the belief that statism and egalitarianism are twin potentialities carried inside every socialist movement and society. He introduces his observations unequivocally: 'What usually passes for "socialism" is an hierarchically deformed version of statism which emphasizes centralised decision making and planning, extensive social engineering, the negation of political and social pluralism, and the concentration of state power within the upper levels of the ruling party's organisation.'

It's regrettable that this important insight is not taken over into the substance of the material which follows it. Indeed, the deeper Marable delves into his comparative historical studies, the less it is emphasised. His avowedly undogmatic Leninism tells us that democratic centralism isn't a problem, only 'its sectarian and hierarchical implementation' and, though he refers in passing to the myriad spontaneous forms in which black political struggles have been articulated, the problems of self-organisation somehow elude his positivistic grip: Nkrumah is berated for the degeneracy of his bureacratic regime but Marable locates a deeper failure in his inability to develop a 'sufficient cadre of socialists who could implement programs with some degree of efficiency'.

Despite numerous rhetorical qualifications, the variation of Marxism he proposes is depressingly conventional. The 'vanguard party' steadily emerges as the catalyst of all legitimate political action; it alone can guarantee the success of popular movements, supply their theoretical and political fuel and the braking mechanism which can prevent their slide into corruption. From the vantage point provided by this Bolshevism, George Padmore is damned by his 'blanket rejection of class struggle' and dismissed as 'firmly within the camp of Western imperialism'. DuBois — the subject of a recent biography by Marable — is castigated in similarly high-handed manner for his 'zionism'. Unlike these writers, Marable yields a measure of political autonomy to black struggles but is either reluctant or unable to make the analytical, epistemological adjustments which this gesture demands. A thoroughly economistic theory of class politics and struggle gradually takes shape and provides a grand theoretical standard against which the asymmetrical reality of empirical political action will be measured and found wanting.

Bringing so much discontinuous material together at all is a formidable achievement and Marable's essays certainly have their moments. His comparison of Maurice Bishop with Toussaint is perceptive and, though they are largely gleaned from secondary sources, the pages of dry observation are peppered with insights. Nevertheless, problems of political focus proliferate in the general chapters, where they are compounded by the extraordinary scale of the analysis Marable is trying to develop. Diaspora history requires the writer to zig-zag across time and space, but his velocity is such that the analysis barely touches down. Interesting though it may be, the welter of detail his researchers have excavated for him tends to swamp the more abstract arguments and the material loses much of its vitality in being compressed. More than this, Marable sometimes appears uncomfortable with the abstraction which diaspora history necessitates if any general sweep is to be discerned in the chiaroscuro of local and regional particularities. His attempt to develop the African diaspora as a unit of radical historical enquiry is a bold one. But there is a more profound challenge in the need to demonstrate both its unity and its diversity without resorting to the sterile formulae of anachronistic Marxism. □

YOUNG ADULTS

Greensleeves

Adèle Geras

IN SPRING the Women's Press brought out the 'Livewire' books. Now Virago follows with 'Upstarts'. Judging from the names alone, it seems you are required to be fizzing with electrical energy or leaping into action; tough luck on dreamers, full-time liers-about-on-sofas or the unreformed bone-idle.

Virago's Upstarts look wonderful: pale green covers with good illustrations which will become as familiar as the dark-green Modern Classics. The first four books (two fiction,two non-fiction) offer something for almost every taste.

Rosa Guy's **My Love, My Love** (£2.95) is a retelling of the little mermaid story in a Caribbean setting. The best things about it are the lush, poetic prose, the conjuring up of heat and storms both in the weather and in the heroine, Désirée, and the imagery of death and suffering personified by the demon, Papa Gé: 'He grinned around a cigar clenched between brown teeth that were dripping with blood.' I doubt if modern young women will have much patience with all this sacrifice for the sake of a man who couldn't care less, but the quality of the writing makes it possible to suspend disbelief for the duration of the novella.

Short stories are A Good Thing. You can read one, put the book aside for a bit, pick it up and read another, and so on. **Hotel Romantika** (£2.95) by Melanie MacFadyean is a great title, but the stories are much more variable. Some, like the title story and the one that begins the book, are annoying: the characters are cardboard cut-outs for the most part. Others are much better. I liked 'The Poodles of Doom', 'Sweet Sisters' and, especially, 'First Love': that, of all the stories, sounded as if it was about real feelings and real people in recognisable situations.

Whether teenagers need special 'teenage' fiction written for them is one of the questions that greatly exercise publishers and writers. It's a fact that many of you read adult books of all kinds and therefore shouldn't feel yourselves confined to 'Upstarts' but should also seek out the many books you would enjoy among the dark-green Viragos, or anywhere else. You can't divide good fiction into rigid age-bands. It ought to be capable of crossing lots of barriers, not least that of age. However, on to Virago's non-fiction.

Falling for Love by Sue Sharpe (£3.50) is, as the author puts it, 'teenage mothers talking'. What they are talking about is having babies: the problems, fears and hostility they've had to face, and the love and support they've been given, in taking the decision to have children while they are still little more than children themselves. Giving birth and all that surrounds it is an endlessly fascinating subject and the young mothers tell their stories vividly and movingly. Sue Sharpe's accompanying narrative is clear and helpful, and there's a good list of relevant names and addresses at the back. This book will become, I'm sure, indispensable to many people. You should tell your teachers about it.

In **Bitter Sweet Dreams** (£2.95) readers of *Just Seventeen* were asked by Lenore Gooding to send in their thoughts on all kinds of topics. If you've read *True to Life* edited by Susan Hemmings (Sheba), you might not be ready for more of the same. Still, this kind of book is like having a natter with about a hundred people and therefore lots of you might enjoy it. It's unfair, I know, to pick out just one person, but Lauri Owen is a poet to watch, and her 'A Shock of Hair' is what I'll remember from the first four Upstarts. Good luck to Virago, and I hope they don't mind my quoting Ms Owen's

A postcard of a hanging

Matthew Sweeney

I sent you a postcard of a hanging,
the first one I attended, not thinking
I'd like it, or even stand it, as you
must have loathed my postcard too
till you realised it must be a trick,
a decadent, oriental gimmick
to put liberals off their breakfast
of an egg, toast, jam and the rest.

I imagine your laughs then, the card
propped against the milk, as you read
again how I thrived in the East —
every meal a ginger and chilli feast;
the girls; the boys . . .; how vibrant
the hours and how little I spent.
And you believed it, you knew
that all my varied antics were true.

And you turned to the picture again,
a colour print — a gallows, two men,
one hooded, one holding a noose
of whitest rope, for the moment loose,
and low in the foreground, a crowd
of men mainly, silently loud,
all eastern, except for two or three —
one of whom, if you look closely, is me.

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poem in full:

Never cut your hair.
Nothing to do with femininity
Just
Never cut it.
Let it grow
Deep down your back,
Perhaps hide it in a twist,
For the silk, or locks, or waves
That swell from you
Might be the only
Image of freedom
You can have. □

CRIME

Slippery as sin

Nick Kimberley

SEVENTY-FIVE YEARS is a long time in the history of crime fiction; long enough for the thriller to have assumed so many forms that it's impossible to identify it as one single thing. In spanning that three-quarters of a century of generic mutability, two recently published thrillers establish different extremes of narrative possibility. In the process, each comes up with an anti-hero whose ability to change form is as refined as the thriller's itself.

Marcel Allain and Pierre Souvestre began writing what was to turn into a 32-novel series of Fantômas yarns in 1911; they were an immediate success in France and were quickly translated into English. A cult following grew amongst Dadaists and Surrealists, who claimed the enigmatic Fantômas as an unwitting accomplice in their plans for social and aesthetic transformation. The books have been out of print in English for years, but now the anonymously translated 1915 edition of **Fantômas** (Picador, £3.50) has been reprinted, with an interesting new introduction by John Ashbery.

Ashbery says, 'One shouldn't analyse too closely the charms of this superb charade, as flimsy as they are durable' — a clear warning that some creative thinking is necessary if we are to recapture the subversive essence of this villain. What the novel most resembles is a melodrama in which the rich and happy are preyed on by an evil being intent on making them poor and miserable. The figure of Fantômas is rarely glimpsed; at one stage or another most of the central characters are suspected of being that creature. Suspicion even falls on Juve, the ratiocinative copper who's intent on being Nemesis to this blight on bourgeois society.

At this level the novel is quaint but no masterpiece. But the enigmatic Fantômas, by his very lack of presence, rouses the imagination. When it becomes clear that his amorality is bottomless, he begins to intrigue us. He respects nothing: even the adulterous love which seems to be his *raison de tuer* has a casual air to it. He travels the length and breadth of France, sowing misery and mayhem, appearing in a different guise to each person whose life he taints. Even by the end of the novel, we're not sure which is the *real* Fantômas. The answer is, of course, all of them — he has become a glamorous chimera rendered fleshly by the world's need for something nasty. In an earlier time, he might have been an Antichrist; for Allain and Souvestre, farceurs both, his amorality is more charming, more sociable. This oddly modernised translation does just enough to suggest the appeal of this pulpish demon. Will anyone have the nerve to publish more of the series?

In 1987, Fantômas seems an almost polite blackguard; only imaginative recreation uncovers anything diabolic about him. Nowadays we demand something more unpleasant. The central character of James Ellroy's **Silent Terror** (Avon, $3.50, available from Compendium Books) is just the job. He's Martin Plunkett, a convicted multiple killer who refuses to apologise for his sins, instead setting out to show that he's even worse than the public suspects. The book takes the form of a confession which he's preparing for publication, in which he reveals that the handful of murders for which he's been convicted are just the icing on the cake — he asks for dozens more to be taken into account.

Ellroy is working with our obsession with mass murderers; at one point, his hero confronts Manson in prison and suggests that, when it comes to gore, Charlie doesn't really cut the mustard. Ellroy maintains that faintly comic edge throughout; for all his horrific deeds, we're never quite sure that Plunkett is any more substantial than Fantômas. He engineers his mother's suicide, then drinks her blood; brings himself to an orgasm while disembowelling a dog; and sets off on a nationwide tour of sexually tinged murder. This is a sort of *bildungsroman* in which the hero finds his identity through murder. The elements of pastiche are well-controlled: we get a primal scene; a homosexual encounter with a cop who's a twin figure, using his authority to conceal his own series of murders; and a wonderful climax in which Plunkett makes his stand against 'the bankruptcy known as HAPPY FAMILY LIFE' — dismembering corpses in all directions, he tosses one set of limbs 'into a dusty chair covered with tennis balls', another 'in the sink along with the dishes'.

Like Fantômas, Plunkett survives partly by an ability to assume a variety of forms appropriate to each vile act. While Ellroy has cast his novel in the form of a psychological investigation — 'a chilling journey into the mind of a serial killer' says the cover — it becomes apparent that Plunkett, again like Fantômas, has no real psychology, but is animated evil. Although overlong, *Silent Terror* is a witty mix of horror novel, thriller and black comedy.

The central thug in Bill James' **Halo Parade** (Constable, £8.95) is another strangely featureless villain — although he has a name, he's mostly referred to as 'You-Know-Who'. I can't work out if James is serious about this, but You-Know-Who seems a sort of meta-villain or Everyscoundrel who embodies all that James sees as unpleasant — he's working-class, gay and violent. The police who trail him are little better, sacrificing their colleagues and cheating on their wives when it suits them. There's a memorable chief constable with a nice line in dry wit: for him, 'caring' is a 'bloody Gerald Kaufman word', while 'police funerals are purgatory. The hymn singing is always so mawkish and rough'. James is torn between a conventional police novel and a more interesting immortality play.

After all this rough and tumble, Ruth Rendell is peculiarly civilised. **Talking to Strange Men** (Hutchinson, £10.95) juggles two narratives, one a cod spy story, the other a portrait of a painfully unhappy man trying to woo his estranged wife back. There is the abiding Rendellian sense that none of us is 'normal', balanced; violence and misery are always on the verge of swamping us all. In her novella **Heartstones** (Hutchinson, £6.95) the unhappiness is so suffocatingly evoked that it seems a blessing that this is such a short piece of fiction: only at the climax do we realise that we've been teased. Rendell, like Ellroy, has an intimation of the way in which psychological 'realism' masks as much of a character as it reveals; for all its understated control, her writing is capable of uncovering a further dimension of wretchedness. □

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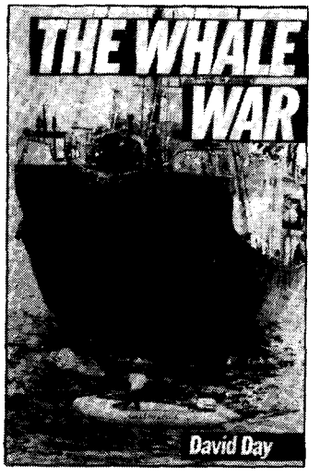

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Final solution for ITV

Tom L. Donald, Joint Managing Director, Portman Productions Ltd, London W1
I would like to offer one or two points for reflection which are, I feel, of relevance in the current debate about independent access to television (*NS* 29 May). First, while it may be very tough on TVS to receive only £145,000 per hour for one of their programmes on the network, the truly independent companies, by which I mean one not holding a broadcasting franchise, can expect only a tiny fraction of that. It therefore follows that however unjust the relative position of ITV companies within the system may seem, it is as nothing compared to the invidious position in which the independent companies operating within the real market place find themselves.

As an independent producer functioning under these conditions for the last 30 years I have managed to achieve a level of success only by operating almost exclusively outside the UK (at least in the days prior to Channel 4). I would love to have redressed this position on many occasions but it has just not been commercially possible, for obvious reasons. The only solution, in my opinion, is for the disbandment of ITV as it currently stands and the introduction of other commercial television channels in direct competition with one another. It might make life harder on the companies comprising the so-called 'big-five', and definitely would for companies like TVS, but a climate of true competition would result. And this could only lead to higher standards.

The post-mortem begins

R. R. Pearce, Ipswich
Reading Paul Hirst (*NS* 12 June) was like swallowing a very bitter pill with the sugar sucked off. How could such a brilliant election campaign end in such heavy defeat? Doubtless autopsies have already begun.

One reason stands out: Labour's defence policy has proved to be not just a small button, but a veritable Achilles' heel. The policy is sound enough: its presentation was an abysmal failure. Appeals for nuclear disarmament for reasons of morality, humanity, and the horrors of nuclear war are very well for CND, but most people — even Labour supporters — see that morality and humanity are irrelevant; and, like the Tories, would answer the threat of horror with Trident.

Labour never *attacked* the Tories' reliance on nuclear arms: never tried to expose the fallacies of nuclear defence and nuclear deterrence. Nuclear weapons are essentially offensive. All the nuclear weapons in this country are for a 'first strike': a pre-emptive attack upon them would destroy them — and us. They do not deter attack, they encourage it. (Of course, the Americans might manage to launch their cruise missiles first: then retaliation would destroy us.)

One item Labour should change in its non-nuclear defence policy: Polaris should, for the time being, be kept. If there were no nuclear weapons in this country, Polaris would be an adequate deterrent to the 'nuclear blackmail' that many people fear. Not being committed to a first strike, it would pose no threat to peace. Labour's defeat should not tempt it to abandon its non-nuclear policy; but it must think a lot more about its presentation.

William McDowell, London SE9
The result of the general election should be a surprise to no one. Labour, no longer committed to withdrawal from the EEC and with a credible leader, managed to squeeze the Alliance vote. Unilateral nuclear disarmament ensured that Mrs Thatcher was, however, bound to be returned. Labour by squeezing the Alliance in the early part of the campaign caused a later swing to the Tories by those, particularly SDP voters, determined that the special relationship with America, the stability of NATO and the Thatcher restraint on the trades unions would not be destroyed.

The moral is simple. If Her Majesty's Opposition is serious about securing power, then the CND policy must be jettisoned. If the party wishes to remain 'pure' on this issue and still hopes to secure Cabinet places, then proportional representation is essential. PR would also, of course, do more to address the North/South dichotomy than a Labour victory.

Private privilege

Brian Harrison, Watford
The Director of the Independent Schools Information Service writes that independent schools 'neither need or ask for "subsidies",' and throws around a lot of unsubstantiated numbers (Letters 5 June).

Social Trends, 17 (1987, p60) shows that the assisted places scheme cost £1,610 per child in 1985/86 made up of £1,530 for fees and £80 for 'additional assistance'. (None of this is for boarding fees.) Social Trends also shows (p67) that total expenditure during 1984-85 in non-metropolitan counties was £716 per primary school pupil and £1,030 per secondary school pupil; in metropolitan districts it was £767 and £1,075; in the London authorities it was £1,000 and £1,475. If the independent schools are not being subsidised, why do they receive up to twice as much as maintained schools?

And if the private schools do not need the assisted places scheme to fill their classrooms and are turning potential fee-paying parents away, as the Director claims, doesn't this indicate that private education, like private health care, is only concerned with the profitable and easily educated/treated clients, and not with anyone who has more complex or demanding requirements?

It seems strange that the highest-spending London authorities should be criticised for being too profligate with their education spending when it comes nowhere near the unit costs of the assisted places scheme: but that desire to average down spending on state education, while planning to allow some schools to declare UDI from their LEA, demonstrates the extent to which the state education sector is being recreated as a safety net for the privileged.

Curiouser and curiouser . . .

Gerald Frost, Director, Institute for European Defence & Strategic Studies
I am pleased to assure you that your evident concern for the independence of this Institute (*NS* 29 May) is wholly unwarranted. It is preserved not only by an independent-minded director and Council of Management, but also by a diversity of funding sources, plus the revenue from the sale of publications — £20,000 last year and steadily rising. Indeed, it is curious that your concern was not directed towards those institutes and 'think tanks' which have but one source of funding, and that the State, but then your reporters' sensibilities seem to be of a highly selective nature.

It is most certainly true that we have received generous funding from the Washington-based Heritage Foundation (which we much hope will continue) but then we have never made any secret of this. Along with most organisations in this country working in the area of defence and international relations — including the largest and longest established — we seek funding on both sides of the Atlantic; this is a source of strength rather than vulnerability.

The reputation for combining political passion with truthfulness which your journal has recovered under its present editor is clearly not served by the paranoid imagination displayed by Messrs Gavshon, Schapiro, Corn and Black nor by their grossly inaccurate, slipshod and partial reporting.

For example, it is simply not the case that we co-operated closely with the Coalition for Peace through Security in the preparation and distribution of our book, *Protest and Perish: A Critique of Unilateralism*. The extent of the 'link' between us was that CPS purchased copies of the book; so did the Soviet Embassy, CND, several Labour MPs, and the Labour Research Department. The discount which CPS received for their modest multiple order (according to our records, 10 copies) was in no way unusual: we would be delighted to extend the same terms to readers of the *New Statesman*.

Sir Peter Blaker was not 'the critical second person' in determining the Institute's priorities; programme and priorities were already established when Sir Peter joined the board.

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Protest and Perish was not our first publication; it was our fourth. Mr Frank Shakespeare was not a 'founding member' of the advisory council; he joined after it was formed; he is no longer Chairman of the Heritage trustees having resigned several years ago on entering government service; Baroness Cox was not a senior spokesman in the Lords; she was a junior spokesman. Even when the facts are easily and publicly available, you get them wrong. The US brewer Mr Joseph Coors does not provide most of the Heritage Foundation's income. At the present time, I am told that he contributes approximately 3 per cent.

Finally, I must point out that some of the remarks attributed to me have been edited in such a way as to give a different flavour and meaning from that which I conveyed and that the interview during which they were made was sought under false pretences. On that occasion, Mr Schapiro simply presented himself as a representative of *The Nation*, the New York magazine; he neglected to mention that he was part of a kind of writer's co-operative and that its copy would appear in a totally different journal. Had I known that his colleagues in this enterprise included Mr Gavshon, whose previous references to this Institute have been inaccurate and misleading, I should not have given it in the first place. But Mr Schapiro curiously did not mention that.

How it works down under

Anthony Koch, Lindfield, Australia

Australians go to the polls on 11 July. Because there are two houses to elect, each with a different voting system, there are countless combinations and permutations of tactical and strategic voting to consider, that would blow the mind of the average UK voter.

The lower House of Representatives consist of single member constituencies elected on the Alternative Vote system. Voters in marginal seats will be courted by all parties. Minor parties with only a few per cent support will have their moment of glory as they hold a fleeting power to direct their supporters' second preferences to support a particular major party, which does tip the balance on occasions.

Voters in safe Labor seats have no real choice but voters in safe conservative seats have a real choice if there is both a Liberal and National candidate standing. The Liberals and Nationals swap preferences to keep the Labor candidate out. In a really safe seat the small number of Labor preferences may make the actual choice between the Liberal and National candidates. The AV system allows lots of tactical voting, but in a constructive way.

The upper house — the Senate — consists of multi-member constituencies with one electorate per state. Independents and minor parties have a real chance of being elected, as the quota is only 14 per cent of the vote. The AV or preferential system is still employed. You can vote National 1, Liberal 2, Labor 3, then National again. To avoid having to number as many as 72 squares you can now choose to vote for a party list instead. Our PR system gives a real choice to minority voters in safe seats.

Safe levels of radiation

Sarbjit Johal, London SE8

We should be pushing for an international imposition of safe levels of radiation. Mothers with young babies in Bangladesh have again been made victims of badly thought-out government decisions which have given in to business interests. Imports of powdered milk have caused immense fear. It comes from Poland and is contaminated with dangerously high levels of radiation, Poland being hardest hit by the Chernobyl nuclear accident. Recent press reports that a young boy died after drinking the imported milk have driven mothers to seek out local milk which has led to rapid price increases.

The government seems to be in a dilemma about imposing an acceptable level of radiation. Initially it was 300 bequerels, now reduced to 90. If there are more deaths, this figure may fall again. There is no internationally agreed figure on a safe level.

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BUAV's salary structure is currently under review.

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GENTLY AGEING, waist-thickening but still attractive male socialist dreamer, living in Midlands, looking for female companion to plan occasional escapes from work, worry and complications. Box (25)5123. W25.25

HUMOROUS GENTLEMAN who looks about 50, but is actually rather older, seeks delightful brunette companion — nobody too intellectual or arty. Box (25)5127. W25.26

IS LONELINESS a disease? If so I've got it! By no means young. Nor blonde. No car. Interests: history, literature and music. NW8, NW3. What about it? Box (25)5101. W25.27

IS THERE an articulate, educated, adventurous female, mentally and physically fit, seeking stimulus in company of young 35-year-old, in pursuit of life, love and learning. Box (25)5121. W25.28

LOVELY LONDON LADY (late 40s), intelligent, attractive, warm, vivacious, seeks soulmate — that special, essentially mature (50+), caring, cultured, grad. professional man of calibre, charisma, integrity and means — loving commitment. Box (25)5095. W25.29

MALE-LOOKING (but actually female), 32, seeks woman for friendship/relationship. Many interests especially writing, socialist outlook, sincere, caring. You maybe sensitive, strongminded. Box (25)5096. W25.30

MUSIC-LOVING, theatre-going male (40+), needed to bring back some sparkle into the life of unattached, female lecturer in Central Scotland. Box (25)5117. W25.31

NOT-UNATTRACTIVE WOMAN, tall, 35, intelligent, somewhat serious, loving but marooned; seeks equine-tolerant, outgoing, kind, secure, not-unattractive man, initially for friendship — perhaps a lasting relationship? Box (25)5110. W25.32

OLD FRIENDS: an introduction agency for the over forties. Loneliness is not inevitable. Details from: Anne Brent, 18a Highbury New Park, London N5 2DB. 01-226 5432. N15.31

SOUTH BUCKINGHAMSHIRE male, 31, graduate, seeks lady for sharing. I have interests in walking, cinema, books, writing, wining/dining, but I'm open to suggestions. Box (25)5128. W25.35

SUCCESSFUL LADY Business Executive has most things in life, except time to meet even more successful attractive men, thirties or forties. High standards plus sense of humour essential. Photo please. Box (25)5086. W25.36

SUNSET IN AVON, Somerset or Wales. Retired intellectual, book-loving handyman-gardener, sought by studious graduate, country-loving cook-housekeeper, view joining forces anon. Box (24)5069. W24.15

3 FIFE WOMEN (35-45) living separately, hoping to widen horizons, and meet new male company. Catholic tastes, but good fun. Don't be daunted. Box (25)5102. W25.11

VERY PERSONABLE, attractive, unattached, considerate professional, own lovely Coastal home, many interests — seeks attractive, good-natured lady, friendship/marriage. Nationality unimportant, Asian lady particularly welcome. Box (25)5089. W25.37

WINEMERCHANT & EDITOR, 77, with slight mobility problem, but well-preserved and possibly good looking would like to meet a lady, quiet, not too talkative, of any social background, colour for friendship, some cuddling and travel etc. Please write with phone number to: Box (25)5120. W25.38

WOMAN, late forties, attractive, intelligent, solvent. Interests: arts, walking, travelling, seeks honest, caring, uncomplicated man with a sense of humour for genuine relationship. Box (25)5097. W25.40

PERSONAL

AUTHOR AND WINEMERCHANT, with slight mobility problem (Parkinsons) offers a young woman, 21-41, with positively no domestic ties for the next two years. £70 per week plus all expenses as a Companion/Lady Friday/Secretary. Good driver with Continental driving experience. Room with TV provided. First stint will be to motor round Ryedale, N. Yorkshire, looking for freehold house to live in. Then Spain, winter '87/'88. Please write with telephone number to Box (25)5119. A.L.A. Full length snap (returnable) appreciated. W25.6

FEMALE UNIVERSITY teacher, 45, rather tired of deeply sensitive, ambivalent academics, would like to meet an intelligent man who has by now sorted out some of the usual life traumas. Box (25)5103. W25.7

GENERAL SERVICES

CV PREPARED on word processor, fast, efficient service. Tel. 0494 452650/27965. W25.1

QUALITY TYPING English, German, French. Moderate charges. Anne Shotts: 01-452 6617. N49.27

ACCOM. VACANT

HOVE, SEAFRONT (10 mins station — Victoria 1 hour) Flatshare available in small luxury flat, separate kitchen (magnificently equipped) and bathroom for woman who would have sole use of the flat for five days and share with the owner at weekends. £20 p.w. in return for some help with the flat and assisting the owner who has slight mobility problems. Weekends only. The only problem is that there is only one bedroom so that something would have to be arranged for weekends. Please write to Box (25)5099 with references. No deposit necessary if these are OK. W25.2

MATURE PERSONS wanted to share attractive five bedroomed house, with sunny garden for 2 years from August, while professional owners are abroad. 5 mins walk to Brixton/Stockwell tube. Must be prepared to care for two cats. £40-£50 per person per week exclusive. Box (25)5087. W25.3

ACCOM. EXCHANGE

TUNISIAN DOCTOR and family seek accommodation in London, August — in exchange for use of villa in Tunisia. Tel. 0983 752020. W25.9

ACC. WANTED

GERMAN COUPLE, writers, non-smokers require secluded cottage — 2 months or longer. Refs. Tel. 01-485 4900. W25.8

BILLBOARD

Enquiries: Laura Berryman 01-739 1645

Theatre

ROYAL SHAKESPEARE COMPANY 01-638 8891 **BARBICAN: RSC/Royal Insurance Armchair Proms** 550 stallseats for £5.50 from 8.30 .am. on the day. **ROMEO & JULIET** 18 June 7.30 p.m. **MACBETH** 19 June 7.30 p.m., 20 June 2p.m. Full price perfs **ROMEO & JULIET** 22, 23 June, **RICHARD II** 26-30 June **THE PIT: COUNTRY DANCING** by Nigel Williams, 19, 20, 24, 25 June, **WORLDS APART** by Jose Triana 26-30 June. **SARCOPHAGUS** by Vladimir Gubaryev 22-23 June. **MERMAID:** 01-236 5568 **THE FAIR MAID OF THE WEST** by Thomas Heywood 19, 20, 24, 25 June. **THE TWO NOBLE KINSMEN** by Shakespeare and Fletcher final perfs 26-30 June. **EVERY MAN IN HIS HUMOUR** by Ben Jonson 22, 23 June, 1, 2, July.

NATIONAL THEATRE 01-928 2252 Olivier (open stage) **ANTONY & CLEOPATRA, A SMALL FAMILY BUSINESS.** Lyttelton (proscenium stage) **THE MAGISTRATE.** Cottesloe (small auditorium) **A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE, ROSMERSHOLME, THREE MEN ON A HORSE.** See daily press for dates and times or ring recorded information 01-928 2256.

BLOOMSBURY THEATRE 01-387 9629. Fri. 8 p.m. **THE MUSIC BIZ** new sixties musical. Tickets £5 concs £3. Tues. 23-Sat 27 June 8 p.m. **WHAT THE BUTLER SAW** by Joe Orton Royal Holloway & Bedford New College Student production. £3.50, concs £2.50.

Folklore Festival

SPECTACULAR FOLKLORE FESTIVAL in Bulgaria 10-19 August at Rozhen Rhodope Mountains. Band of 300 bag-pipers, dance, song, music, crafts. From Heathrow, fullboard, excursions. Price £368 children 6-12 £286. Also dance & music course £20 extra. Places limited. Contact immediately British-Bulgarian Friendship Society, 69 Upper Street, London N1 0NY (tel 01-359 0507) or Bulgarian Tourist Office (01-499 6988).

BOOKS/ PUBLICATIONS

FOR THE DISCERNING READER new and secondhand books at Adelaide Book Centre (beside Cranks) Adelaide Street, London WC2 (opp Charing Cross BR Stn.). W11.4

REVIEW COPIES and other books in fine condition bought and sold by Vermillion Books, 57 Red Lion St, London WC1. Tel: 01-242 5822. N49.24

FINANCIAL

SALARIED PERSONS Postal Loans Ltd. Loans from £50. 175 Regent Street, London W1. For written quote apply: Tel: 01-734 1974. N49.39

MEETINGS

THEOSOPHY: S.a.e. for pamphlet, book list, programme. Free talks or discussions, Sundays 8-9pm ULT, 62 Queen's Gardens, London W2 3AL. N40.6

AGENDA

Deadline: 2pm Mondays

SAT 20 JUNE

FEMINIST BOOK FORTNIGHT. Leicester. Blackthorn Books, 70 High Street. 8 p.m. Sheila Ernst and Carole Sturdy will be talking about 'Living with the Sphinx' a new collection of papers from the Women's Therapy Centre, London.

TUES 23 JUNE

CENSORSHIP: THE TRUTH BEHIND THE ISRAELI MYTH. Speakers include: Michael Lowry, Yael Lotan, Simon Collings, David Watkins, Colin Prescod. 7.30 p.m. Friends Meeting House, 23 St Martins Lane, London WC2. Committee for the Freedom of Expression of Palestinians and Israelis (CFEPI) public meeting.

THURS 25 JUNE

SOCIALIST SOCIETY: 'What's left after the Election' Hilary Wainwright & Raphael Samuel look at the prospects. 7.30 p.m. at The Blue Posts — corner Broadwick & Berwick Streets, W1. Tel. 01-734 8501.

FRI 26 JUNE

SHAW SOCIETY. Hayward Morse on 'Shaw, My Bete Noire' — Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, Holborn. Coffee 6.30 p.m. Meeting 7 p.m.

SAT 27 JUNE

MARCH TO COMMEMORATE Irish Hunger Strikers. Assemble Finsbury Park, N4, 12.30 p.m. Nearest tube Finsbury Park. Led by three Republican Flute Bands. Speakers at Rally inc. Sinn Fein, Irish Prisoner of War Repatriation Committee and Pan Africanist Congress.

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BACKCHAT

INFRA DIG

Daughter of the groom

Diana Eden

SUCH IS the current level of my social standing that I have recently returned from what was undoubtedly the Wedding of the Year. These are financially unsettled times, so, for those of you who have draconically retrenched and de-subscribed from *Tatler, Harpers* and the *Farmers Weekly*, let me here announce that last month, up in County Durham, my agrarian, septuagenarian, widower father was joined in holy wedlock with the very lovely Mary, widow of the parish next door but one to his.

The groom was resplendent: top hat, morning suit, button hole. In short, we got *the lot*. And his bride was a vision in apricot and cream. The single sartorial disappointment proved to be my son, who had surfaced heroically, bleary eyed and blinking, from the pool halls of West London, but without the promised fish-net stockings or lacey camisole. (We were given to understand that he had felt some prenuptual dissatisfaction with the straightness of his seams.) Still, the lad's peroxide pony-tail cut the necessary dash and fond aunts were soon declaring him Durham's sweetest bridesmaid.

Northern wedding breakfasts certainly repay the attentions of the amateur sociologist. Clans converge from every corner of the land; dissidents who got on bikes decades ago return, unprodigal and with fancy southern ways; a drink or three is taken and tired, emotional feelings can start to run quite high — hence comedian Al Read's famed and telling understatement, 'There was enough said a our Nora's wedding . . .'

Quite a lot was said by the sole Home Counties guest, who, armed with passport, map and compass, catapulted into Teeside airport via the flight from Heathrow and decanted on the tarmac in a state of shuttle-lagged, disorientated shock. Had we ever realised, our intrepid traveller gasped, that Darlington was *even further north than Finchley*? The more reclusive members of my family clearly had not, and received the information with ill-concealed relief.

I am, I readily admit it, a committed wedding buff. Having attended dozens of moving services in my time — a not inconsiderable amount of them my own — I can fully understand the desire to get married. But *remaining* married strikes me as more questionable in merit. Marriage should be treated like every other terminal disease, with emphasis upon the quality rather than the quantity of life.

My friend Joanie (the radiant matron-of-honour at whichever wedding it was at which I married her ex-husband) once fell into classic strangers-on-a-train conversation with a woman who epitomised contentment, vitality and wit. It emerged that, after 30 years of marriage, the game old bird had been abruptly widowed. Joanie asked, in hushed and sympathic tones, how long she had taken to recover from the trauma of bereavement. 'About an hour and a half,' flashed the beaming reply. 'He was the most miserable old bugger in the world; life's been paradise ever since; the funeral . . .'

I remain, however, cock-eyed and optimistic about the wedded bliss of Mary and my father. In church, the cherub-faced curate intoned that emotive chestnut from St Paul's letters to the Corinthians, 'And now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.' Yet again, the Good Book has got it wrong. The autumnal couple at the altar bore witness to the fact that the greatest of these — by far — is hope. □

'Norman has a theory that the universe is expanding towards us.'

FIRST PERSON

The one-eyed monkey

Suniti Namjoshi

IT WAS WINTER. The sun was shining like anything. It was pleasant, it was cool. The temperature was about 70 degrees. The one-eyed monkey was feeling mellow and middle-aged. 'I have travelled,' she said. 'I have seen the world. I have lost my tail, six of my teeth and one eye. I have lived. It's time I wrote down what I think about it.' But her friends, the crocodiles, appeared not to have heard.

'Ahem,' she said loudly. 'I'm going to write a book.'

'What for?' murmered one crocodile and went on dozing.

'What about?' muttered the other crocodile and went on basking.

She ignored the first crocodile and addressed the second exclusively.

'About me,' she said strongly.

'Oh,' replied the crocodile. 'Will I be in it?'

'Well, I don't know,' she answered. 'Why would a book about monkeys have crocodiles in it?' But she saw that his eyes were beginning to close, so she added quickly, 'But I'll put you in it.'

'Me as I am?' he asked, stretching out his tail luxuriously.

'No, you as you are in relation to me.'

'Oh.' He sounded dubious.

'And you have to help me,' she put in quickly.

'Help you to write it?' He sounded interested.

'No, no, I can do that. To tell you the truth I've already done it, I want you to help me get it published.'

'Oh.' He thought for a moment. 'Well, I have some contacts with the animal rights people. Send it to them and see what they think.'

So she wrote to them and they wrote back that her title was lacking in human interest. That's what makes a book sell. People are interested in people, you know, they pointed out perfectly pleasantly. But they enclosed the address of a few publishers who were non-mainstream.

The one-eyed monkey had a crisis of conscience. Should she change the title? She changed it. It had been called 'The Life and Leanings of a One-eyed Monkey'. She went through the text. Wherever the word 'monkey' appeared she put in blank. 'The Life and Leanings of a One-eyed Blank'. She said it out loud. She persuaded herself that it had a ring to it. 'I speak in parables,' she told herself bravely. 'The intelligent will know how to read in between the blanks and will appreciate my true, my native, my deliciously *malicious monkey* wit.'

She sent it off to the publishers. Some wrote back and some misplaced it. Those who wrote back told her bluntly, 'The syntax slithers and the vision is monocular. "Who is talking to whom?" may we ask. We regret to inform you that your work is entirely lacking in clarity.' The one-eyed monkey felt disheartened. She brooded for days. Then she re-submitted the manuscript with the

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word 'monkey' typed in clearly. And the miracle happened. A smaller publisher wrote to her saying that they were intrigued by her manuscript and would like to publish it. But please, they begged her to remember, an audience of exclusively one-eyed monkeys was hard to find; could she help to pay for it?

The one-eyed monkey tore her fur in utter despair. Her friends, the crocodiles, happened to notice.

'Oh, all right,' they said. 'We'll help you to re-write it.'

'But it mustn't be about monkeys and it mustn't be about crocodiles.'

'No,' they agreed. They made suggestions and the monkey re-wrote it.

In the end the book achieved a moderate success under the title 'The Amorous Adventures of A One-eyed Minx'. 'Is it autobiographical?' the reviewers wondered. 'No,' declared the monkey quite truthfully, 'I do not recognise myself in it.' But her publishers beamed. They patted her back. 'Art transforms,' they murmured kindly. □

FOOD

And all things nice

Colin Spencer

THE BEST VALUE for money when eating out is still in the ever greater range of Chinese, Indian and Far Eastern restaurants. But although, a decade ago, you could be *certain* that a whiff of the gingered stir-fry or the Tandoori chicken spelt out a meal which would not give your bank manager a seizure, now you no longer can be. Until, that is, you step into the restaurant, where the clues should immediately confront you.

Tatty red flock wallpaper is still the reassuring note overall; but, if there are palms, mirrors and ethnic art, you are in for a sizeable bill. Many of the restaurants go even further up-market now and turn their backs on the ethnic look altogether, preferring Designer's Orient, which errs towards the circumspect and insipid.

However, we are not there to chew the wall coverings; the food is the important factor and many of the new up-market places also cook stunningly well, often returning to original dishes which are new to Western palates. Other restaurants ignore decor and concentrate on the food alone. Ten years ago, you would not find dishes as superlative as those at either **The Dragon Gate** or **Mr Kong**.

These are both in the Chinatown of Soho. The first was the original Szechuan restaurant in London and much on the menu is familiar. The deep-fried seaweed (it is really cabbage or spring greens), sesame prawn toast, smoked fish, steamed dumplings with chilli oil — which is a Peking dish — are all great favourites. As is the crispy Szechuan duck, or the rather unusual tea-smoked duck (which is delicate, with a lot less flavour than the camphor-wood-smoked duck on which it's based). Peking duck is the one which is served in paper-thin pancakes with spring onions and hoisin sauce.

The Dragon Gate also does a marvellously tender squid in ginger and black bean sauce, an excellent salted prawn, where the sea salt becomes a crust on the grilled prawns, and a range of thin noodles cooked with various sauces that are exceptionally good. If you spend £10 for each person, you are on the way to eating a feast.

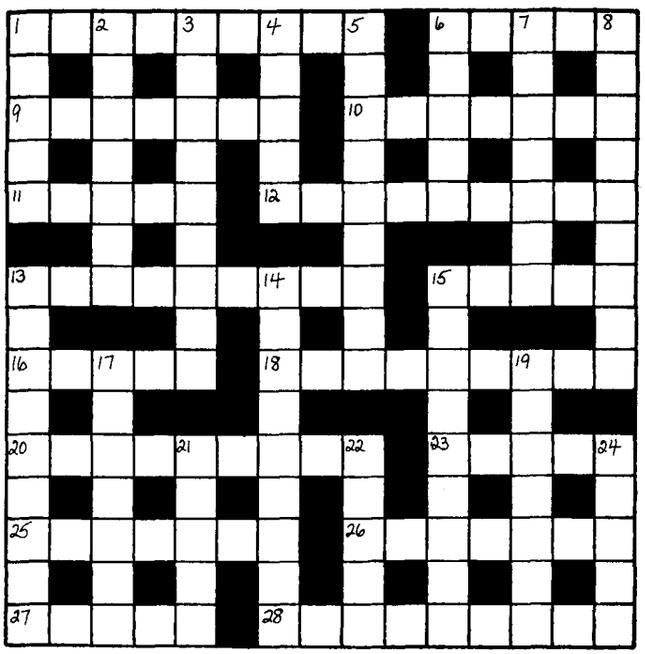
Mr Kong is a Cantonese restaurant which is small and very popular. Its most famous dish must be stir-fried crab in black bean sauce — this sauce is characteristic of the cuisine — where you battle with claw, shell and chopsticks and become gloriously sticky. But the steamed scallops are a fragment of paradise. I had mussels in black bean sauce (less sticky than the crab and a huge treat), squid in shrimp sauce and hung shao, fried bean curd cooked with vegetables. Again, you can eat gloriously well for around a tenner.

At the **Ming** restaurant, you go abruptly up-market and pay for the mirrors, the elegant and spacious rooms and possibly also for the chef from Shantung. There is more meat than is usual: starters comprise a cold platter of sliced beef and jellyfish with shredded duck, also the classically simple steamed scallops with chilli oil. There is a soufflé-light sweet and sour pork and a miraculous bean curd skin roll stuffed with bean sprouts, shrimps and Chinese mushrooms.

Another restaurant where the decor is a little self-conscious is the **Lakorn Thai** in an area where decent eating places are few: it does well in the evening from Sadler's Wells, when tables should be booked. The menu is huge — over 100 dishes,

Weekend Crossword 1561

£3 Book Tokens for the first three correct solutions opened. Entries to Crossword 1561, New Statesman, Foundation House, Perseverance Works, 38 Kingsland Road, London E2 8BA, by first post 3 July.



Name_____

Address_____

_____

ACROSS

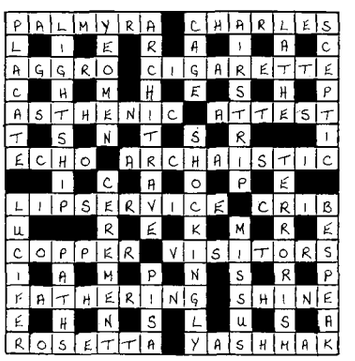
1. Its work is a grind so one needs a period of study in determination (9)
6. Low people have the right to be footballers (5)
9. Listen free to a conservative vessel (7)
10. Talk foolishly with the old woman downstairs? (7)
11. Gloomy although you get a penny back (5)
12. Heroine who makes me tell a story about the desert (9)
13. Coping without the eighteen (9)
15. A crowd would need an endless supply of this plant (5)
16. Scope for a piece after time (5)
18. In sadness a bird establishes fatherhood (9)
20. Chair gets broken in Berlin (9)
23. Jelly included in what was pictured above the recipe (5)
25. Part of aircraft which has a little room inside (7)
26. Hanging down headless in sport (7)
27. Turn out to be a tennis player (5)
28. Do a letter inaccurately, but it is endured (9)

DOWN

1. Twisted the injured place (5)
2. Before being held by it in that place (7)
3. Rising again with most of the others pressing (9)
4. Religion is on strike (5)
5. A page all might turn when there is something to read by (9)
6. Emergency holds up the first courses (5)
7. One of these animals would have to waste away if it lost its home (7)
8. One who gets paid is happy about the cane being broken (9)
13. Smell of a piece of cloth in the country (9)
14. Restless as the devil before I enter a shelter (9)
15. Unrelenting fury in town (9)
17. Spirit caught before man provides something to eat (7)
19. Stamp which puts one politician right inside a tiger's head (7)
21. Man a river as a serf (5)
22. Vessel in which a girl is wrecked (5)
24. Imprisoned for years in patriotic organisation (5)

SETSQUARE

Solution to 1559



Prizewinners to 1559

Mrs Bettine Robb (Allesley, Coventry)
Ms E. Fitzpatrick (Cambridge)
Christine Macpherson (Glasgow)

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including 18 vegetarian ones — but, sadly, the stylish decor does not run to the plates. Food is served on tea plates and you eat from another. This looks mean and tawdry. Still, the food is excellent; so, with luck, you can forget what it is you're eating it from.

There are tempura prawns, crab and green vegetables to start with. There are numerous stuffed pasties filled with spicy meat and vegetables and deep fried. Po pea tord is a Thai spring roll; som tam is grated papaya in a hot and sour salad; peak kai yad sai are chicken wings stuffed with minced pork and vegetables. It's all delicate and pungent at the same time, with flavourings of lemon grass, chilli and nam prik: that unmistakable union of shrimp paste, chilli, lime, garlic, tamarind and fermented fish sauce. (Fish sauce is rich in vitamin B and packs a mighty punch. Bottles can be bought at Chinese stores and it is useful in the store cupboard for adding to stocks, soups and sauces. A teaspoonful added will radically change an insipid sauce into ambrosia.)

For a main course at the Lakorn Thai you can choose between a variety of seafoods, meat, rice and noodles: fried beef with Kaffir lime leaves and chillies, fried prawn with garlic and peppers, fried noodles with mixed food. But the portions are small and, at a fiver each, not inexpensive.

If all the exotic spices of the Far East begin to pall, you could go north and try Russia. A new restaurant, **Gorky Park**, which opened last winter in a street of high-rise apartment blocks that fringes the north side of Regents Park, is enormously popular. Is it the gipsy musicians who strike at the instruments with Hollywood panache? Is it the flavoured vodkas which come in orange, lime, plum and mandarin? Is it the late great-grandmother of the patroness whose recipes we eat?

Whatever it is, you cannot get a table without booking and, even then, I was sat at one stranded betwixt bar and musicians where the sweet nothings I wished to whisper were drowned. I complained at the exposure, they insisted we could not be moved. The policy of the restaurant is to choose your table when booking and everyone that night had been there before or were regulars.

The decor is as politically balanced as can be: Tsarist swagged curtains hang between pillars decorated with a hammer and sickle. The food tastes authentic: herrings in egg and sour cream sauce were a triumph of Russian-Jewry; the blinis comes with real caviar or smoked salmon. My companion's generous portion of boeuf stroganoff was, however, declared too peppery. With a bottle of Georgian wine, the bill for two came to around £40 and we had no dessert. Not cheap, but you are paying for the atmosphere as much as what is on the plate, and these weren't tea plates. □

The Dragon Gate, 7 Gerrard St, London W1V 7LJ; tel: 01-734 5154.
Mr Kong, 21 Lisle St, London WC2H 7BA; tel: 01-437 7341.
Ming, 35-36 Greek St, London W1V 5LN; tel: 01-734 2721.
Lakorn Thai, 197-199 Rosebury Avenue, London EC1; tel: 01-837 5048.
Gorky Park, 41 Mackennal St, St John's Wood, London NW8 7DH; tel: 01-722 5009.

Weekend competition

No 2980 **Set by Gray Dorn**

Bachelors: All selfish and immoral. Should be taxed. Doomed to a lonely old age. *Colonies (our)*: Show sadness when speaking of them. *Palmyra*: An Egyptian Queen? Ruins? Nobody knows. *Orgasm*: Obscene term . . . A few entries from Flaubert's *Dictionary of Received Ideas*, which provided an A-Z of the banality and stupidity of what passed for knowledge, opinion and conversation among the French middle class of the 19th century. Your own thoroughly modern definitions can be drawn from just as many classes, sub-classes and underclasses as you like. Maximum six per entrant, by Wednesday 1 July.

No 2977 **Set by George Cowley**

Reasons why the 8 May issue of the *New Statesman* contained only 32 pages.

Report **By Gray Dorn**

Thanks a lot for being so patient with the other judges during my absence. What a strange competition to return to! For you ought to know that temporary fluctuations in issue size depend on a whole range of complicated technical and economic factors which — as your entries made only too plain — ordinary people couldn't begin to grasp. I must say I was surprised so many of you have been taken in by the myth of reductions or 'cuts' in the *NS*. It's simply *not true*, and we have *figures*, not rhetoric, to prove it. In May 1918 — and indeed *throughout that year* — the *NS* contained 18 pages; in May 1987, 32. Even in our shortest issue, *more* pages, *more* words. We have *increased* the size of the *NS* and shall continue to do so. But of course figures don't tell the whole story — what about *quality*? I think the highlights of that issue speak for themselves: a young Tory on the way forward for the Tories; a young Liberal on the way forward for the Liberals; a full-colour, two-page ad for Ford motor cars; me. Not only that but queues for the *NS* are getting shorter; in fact in some parts of the country . . . Enough. £10 each for these examples of lurid imagination.

Page Numbering and Ideology: The Metaphor of Magazine Thickness

. . . So why does the final page, page 32, end the magazine so abruptly? There are two points of meaning here — the thinness of the magazine, and the number itself. This thinness subverts our faith in what a 'serious' magazine should be — thick and long. It therefore denies the bourgeois satisfaction of closure, leaving us with uncertainty.

The number itself is vital: the fact that the three is more than the two and appears before it suggests a stronger richer class — '3' — oppressing a weaker one — '2'. We are led to desire '23' while reading '32', alerting us to the essential injustice of society. The two goes into the three with one left over, the one being of course the one of page one, thus linking the final page with the first and challenging the notion of an 'end'.

We also see that there are not actually 32 pages at all, but only half that amount, each page having a number on each side. So what we are finally left with is an exposure of the deception of popular forms such as the weekly magazine. We then realise that we needn't bother wading through those boring articles any more, and just read the final page number in the shop, thereby saving 90p . . .

DAVID GAFFNEY

The number 32 has clear overtones which I regret Mr Cowley failed to notice. Some of these were applicable to all readers, some were quite evidently for my private enjoyment. I have drawn up a list for those too imperceptive to do anything but impute lethargy to the Shoreditch scribblers:

The number of oarsmen in the Oxbridge A and B crews, the number of adult teeth, half the squares on a chess board, the number of my bungalow when I worked in Cyprus, two-thirds of the preludes and fugues, the sum of the piano concertos composed by Mozart and Beethoven, the bars in a popular song chorus, freezing point on the Fahrenheit Scale, the number of players and officials in the bar after a rugby match if the referee has to leave early, Christ's age at the time of his death. The issue of 8 May was also tolerably readable. A bonus.

TIM HOPKINS

The editorial in the 8 May issue of *New Statesman* clearly set out the argument for proportional representation. In line with the principles of PR, a decision was taken at Perseverance Works to spread the left-of-centre readership across a broader spectrum. It was reasoned that a shorter edition would allow thinking socialists greater time to peruse alternatives: *Militant, Marxism Today, New Socialist, Interlink, News on Sunday*. Peter Kellner, our Political Editor, calculated that a 20 per cent swing to these publications would enhance *NS* chances of reducing *Spectator* readership. We therefore made a tactical — and temporary — adjustment. As a result, long-term patterns of readership have been altered incalculably.

WILL BELLENGER

Well, Mr Cowley, 8 May, that was the Friday after May Day, wasn't it? Big day in the Labour movement, May Day. You wouldn't expect the staff of a left-wing magazine to show up for work on May Day. They'd be attending rallies all over Britain, that sort of thing. What? Of course the *New Statesman*'s left-wing! No! Certainly not! The editor was not out half the week looking for another job! All right, I'll tell you the truth, just between the two of us. An eight-page feature had to be shelved at the last minute. Can't say more. Would you believe Special Branch might have been involved? No, I didn't think you would. Well, how about this? John Lloyd spotted a sentence in the second paragraph of the third page which, read in a certain light, could just possibly be regarded as disparaging to Neil Kinnock. So the feature was dropped. Believe that? Thought you might.

KEITH NORMAN

This was an experiment in which *NS* co-operated with Local Inquisition and Extrapolation Polls. Following the issue of 8 May, LIE Polls asked a random sample of 93 readers: In your opinion was this issue shorter or longer than previous issues? The results were:

Shorter	19%
Longer	23%
Same length	2%
Don't know	32%
Don't care	24%

This indicates that the perceived length differed from the actual length and that a clear majority of readers who expressed an opinion considered this issue provided better value for money than previous issues.

A further experiment involving a 58-page issue is planned later this year. The results could have wide-reaching effects on the future of publishing and printing . . .

MARGARET J. REEVES

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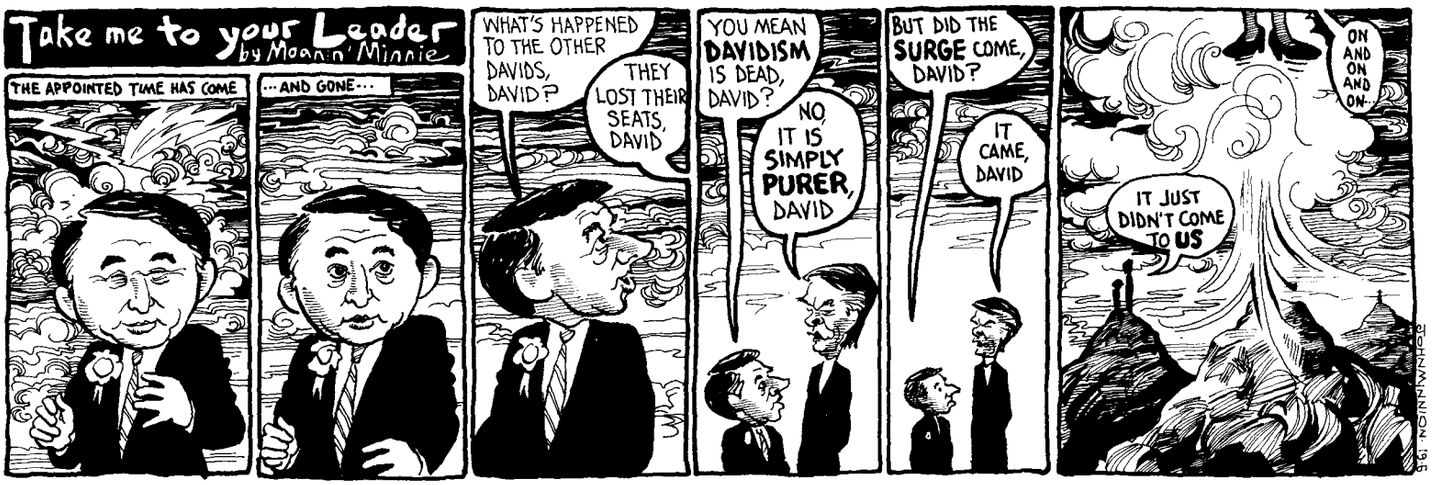
Take me to your Leader
by Moann Minnie
THE APPOINTED TIME HAS COME
...AND GONE...
WHAT'S HAPPENED TO THE OTHER DAVIDS, DAVID?
THEY LOST THEIR SEATS, DAVID
YOU MEAN DAVIDISM IS DEAD, DAVID?
NO, IT IS SIMPLY PURER, DAVID
BUT DID THE SURGE COME, DAVID?
IT CAME, DAVID
ON AND ON AND ON...
IT JUST DIDN'T COME TO US

Chess

FOUR WEEKS AGO I gave a glowing report on Truro schoolboy Michael Adams. I may not have suggested it was a foregone conclusion he would win the world under-16 championship in Graz, but I firmly believed he would. If his results had been of international master standard, his manner of achieving them was even more precocious — the controlled style of a grandmaster, with nothing owed to luck. Adams was as impressive as ever in Graz and his score of 9/11 would normally be good enough to win a tournament. But on this occasion it only gave him the silver medal, since Stefansson of Iceland scored ½ a point more. That there may be a stronger under-16 in the world than Adams is a thought shocking enough to plunge any over-20 master into mid-life crisis.

Damsky of the USSR finished behind Stefansson and Adams in Graz, but the skilled training that he can rely upon receiving may yet help him to outdistance any Western rivals. At least it is now realised how important advice and coaching during the formative teenage years are. But we have a lot of catching up to do. Even Nigel Short, for all his tournament successes and high world ranking, is handicapped by a weak opening repertoire, the legacy of a lack of sufficiently deep preparation.

Taking a broader view, one might not think that such a bad thing. Consider the case of Samuel Reshevsky. As a child prodigy, Reshevsky has no equal in the history of chess. When he was only eight years old, and a little tot for his age too, he was already able to give simultaneous displays and make plus scores against reasonably strong opposition. What an invincible chess-playing machine modern training methods could have made out of that raw talent! Instead, at the age of ten with a tournament win against Janowski to his credit, his family decided on a sort of early retirement for Sammy. So his chess is rationed, he goes to school and then he learns accountancy. Not until his early twenties does he return to serious competitive chess, and his playing career really gets under way at Margate in 1935, where he not only wins the tournament, but also beats Capablanca.

But by 1935 Reshevsky was already 23. At the time he was thought of as a young man — in what was then a middle-aged man's game. Nowadays it's a young man's game and last year Kasparov, at age 23, was defending the world title, a title that Reshevsky was never to win. While Reshevsky was the main threat in the 1950s to the domination of Botvinnik, Smyslov, Keres and Bronstein, he was not as well prepared as the Soviet players and his recurrent time-trouble indicated that he was having to work out variations which his opponents had already been through, or been shown, before they arrived at the board. Now, it could be argued that this is a classic case of ability being impeded by conventional ideas. On that view Reshevsky's teens will be lost years. Most probably it is true that the peak of a career will be higher if more effort goes into the youthful ascent. But how about length of career? For all we know, an early forcing process might sap stamina and endurance. Now 75, Reshevsky must be the world's oldest active GM. From dawn and dusk of a great career:

Reshevsky-Capablanca, Margate 1935. QGD.
1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 e6 3. Nc3 d5 4. Bg5 Nbd7 5. cxd5 exd5 6. e3 Be7 7. Bd3 0-0 8. Qc2 c5 9. Nf3 c4 d5 is going to be Black's weakness. **10. Bf5 Re8 11. 0-0 g6 12. Bh3 Nf8 13. Bxc8 Rxc8 14. Bxf6! Bxf6 15. b3 Qa5?** Capa nods, obviously missing the reply. **16. b4! Qd8 17. Qa4 a6 18. b5 Re6 19. Rab1 Rb8 20. Rb2 Be7 21. bxa6 Rxa6 22. Qc2 Ne6 23. Rfb1 Ra7 24. a4 Nc7 25. Ne5 Qe8 26. f4 f6 27. Ng4 Qd7 28. h3 Kg7 29. Nf2 Ba3 30. Ra2 Bd6 31. Nfd1!** This looks retrograde, but is actually very strong. He will exchange Black's Knight, stripping d5 of defence. **f5 32. Nb5 Ra5 33. Nxc7 Bxc7 34. Nc3 Qe6 35. Qf2 b6 36. Qf3 Rd8 37. Rab2 Qe7 38. Rb4 Rd7 39. Kh1 Bd8 40. g4** Reshevsky criticised this move because of the possibility at Black's 45th. Apparently King to the Q-side and then Rb5 would have been the exact plan. **fxg4 41. hxg4 Qd6 42. Kg1 Bc7 43. Kf2 Rf7 44. g5 Bd8 45. Ke2 Bxg5?** 45 . . . Qe6! 46. Rb5 Rxb5 47. Rxb5 Qf5 was the chance missed. **46. Rxb6 Qa3 47. Kd2! Be7 48. Rb7 Rxa4 49. Qxd5 Ra5 50. Qxc4 Rh5 51. Kd3 Qa8 52. Qe6 Qa3 53. Rd7 Rhf5 54. Rb3 1-0.**

Reshevsky-Ernst, Lugano 1987. Benkö Gambit.
1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 c5 3. d5 b5 4. f3 bxc4 5. e4 d6 6. Bxc4 g6 7. Ne2 Bg7 8. Nbc3 0-0 9. 0-0 Ba6 10. Nb5 Nfd7 11. Nec3 Nb6 12. Be2 N8d7 13. a4 Qb8 14. a5 Nc8 15. Qa4 Qb7 16. Ra3! Reshevsky has treated the opening in original style. Objectively, one doubts whether 4. f3 can be as good as 4. cxb5 or 4. Nf3, but the 'veteran prodigy' shows how White can take the initiative on the Q-side. **Rb8 17. Rb3 Ne5 18. Nd4!** Positionally decisive, though at this stage it is not yet obvious that Black's counterplay will prove harmless. **Qc7 19. Bxa6 cxd4 20. Rxb8 Qxb8 21. Ne2 d3 22. Nf4 Bh6 23. b4! Nb6 24. axb6 Qxb6 + 25. Kh1 Qd4 26. Ne6! fxe6 27. Bxh6 Ng4 28. Bxf8 Nf2 + 29. Rxf2 Qxf2 30. h3 Kxf8 31. Bxd3 Qe1 + 32. Kh2 Qc3 33. Qc2 Qe5 + 34. g3 exd5 35. exd5 Qxd5 36. f4 Qd4 37. b5 Kg7 38. h4 d5 39. Bf1 1-0.**

George Botterill

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☐ Christie's is mounting the oddest sale of the week in aid of the British Field Sports Society. You can bid to have your mare serviced by the Queen's stallion, Shirley Heights (estimate $100,000-$120,000). — *The Times* (Derek Morgan)

☐ Occasionally even the *Sun* draws the line. It was working on a suggestion that the central squiggle in Labour's red rose motif was really Lenin's head in profile. After an impressive degree of effort even Mr Murdoch's finest were forced to admit that the idea didn't stand up. — *Guardian* (Sara Spain)

☐ Young winners of a competition to promote British goods have received their prizes — radios made in Japan. — *Glasgow Herald* (Heather McNally)

☐ Police in Leamington Spa arrested Pooh Bear, Tigger and Snoopy and launched a hunt for Hitler, Noddy, Andy Pandy and the Pink Panther after a fancy dress party in the town ended in a brawl. — *The Times* (Amanda Welles)

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